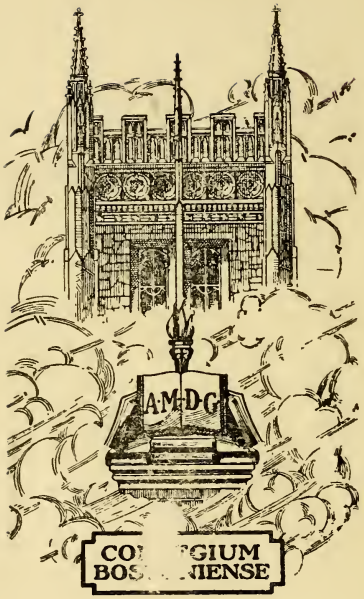
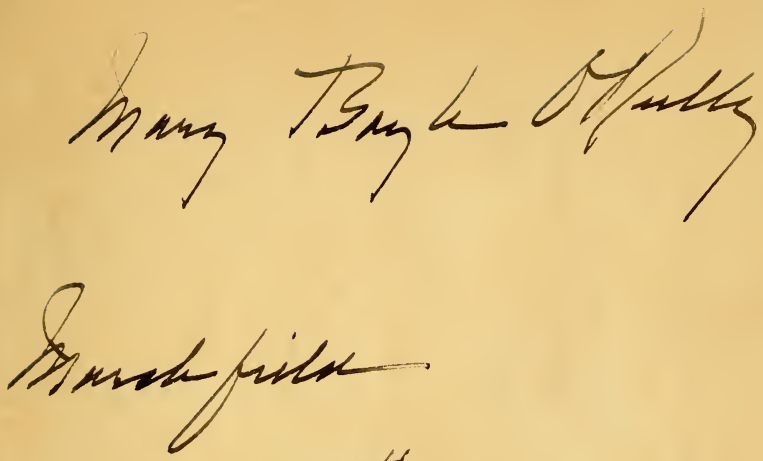
GUN RUNNING FOR CASEMENT

KARL SPINDLER



In Memory Of

John Boyle O'Reilly



GUN RUNNING FOR CASEMENT

NEW NOVELS

MAINWARING MAURICE HEWLETT

THE BLACK DIAMOND
F. BRETT YOUNG

REVOLUTION J. D. BERESFORD

THE LEPER'S BELL
MASSICKS SPARROY

THE JOURNAL OF HENRY BULVER C. VEHEYNE

THE DEATH OF SOCIETY
ROMER WILSON

GUN RUNNING FOR CASEMENT

IN THE EASTER REBELLION, 1916

by

Reserve-Lieutenant KARL SPINDLER
of the German Navy

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GLASGOW MELBOURNE AUCKLAND

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CHAPTER I

A CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS

THE date was the 21st of March, 1916.

It was the usual Wilhelmshaven prize weather, blowing great guns, squalls chasing one another across the sea, grim, blue-gray clouds scudding unceasingly across the sky, while the rain battered on the window-panes and threatened at every fiercer gust to burst them in.

I was just in from a spell of outpost duty, and was looking forward to a very comfortable day indoors, when some one hammered at the knocker.

It was an orderly, bringing an urgent message from my chief. I looked a second time at the address; but there was no mistake about it. My chief wished to see me at 5 p.m. As a rule, these formal invitations from the great boded no good to the recipient. 'All the officers have had them, sir,' said the orderly, who perhaps guessed my thoughts. Thank Heaven, then, there was, at any rate, no need to worry as to what crime I had committed. But I could not help wondering what was in the wind. . . .

The long tramp in the streaming rain was well repaid.

Our flotilla had had orders to supply a volunteer

crew—one officer, five warrant and petty officers, and sixteen men—for special service, an expedition about the goal and purpose of which nothing could for the present, for military reasons, be allowed to become known. The utmost despatch had been enjoined.

Every one of the officers, of course, was eager to go. At the end of the interview my chief gave me a searching glance, and said, 'I have proposed you for the command of this expedition. What have you to say to that?' It need hardly be mentioned that I did not say No! It had long been my keenest wish to see some service a little out of the ordinary, and now my chance had come. I thought myself at that moment the luckiest man on earth.

Even yet, however, I could not be told any particulars. But the facts that the expedition was absolutely secret, that all the crew were to be unmarried men, below a certain age, and that those without dependents were to have the preference—all this pointed to an undertaking of a very special nature indeed.

At five o'clock next morning, before taking out my half-flotilla on patrol for the last time, I assembled the men and talked to them. Purposely, though I myself as yet knew nothing definite, I laid the utmost stress upon the dangers of the expedition, that they might not make up their minds too hastily.

Not until I thought they had some idea of what they were in for, did I give the order: 'Volunteers, three paces forward—march!'

It was a pleasure to see with what alacrity the men

stepped forward, to mark how the eager wish to take part in something big was to be read in every eye. Those who held back were all married men, and even among them there were some who took it hard to have to stay behind.

Even so, the choice was difficult enough. Each group of six boats was to furnish so many men; and the whole crew of the 'mystery ship' was not, for certain reasons, to exceed twenty-two.

After much sifting, the choice was at length made. Those chosen were brave, trustworthy, and—a not unimportant point—powerfully built; each one of them a match for two ordinary men.

After four days of uneventful outpost duty, we were back once more. Even before returning I had received by signal the joyful news that my appointment to the command of the *Libau*—that was to be the name of the mystery ship—had been confirmed.

I lost no time, you may be sure, about proceeding in, locking through, making fast in the inner harbour, and reporting on board the leading-ship of the flotilla. The best of the volunteers from the other sections were chosen, and the ship's company finally made up. The C.O. of the flotilla, Commander Forstmann, bade us farewell in a short and pithy speech; and then we set to at our packing, for by midday the next day we were to be in the train, bound for a destination as yet unknown. That was the sum of our knowledge, for everything was, so far, in Navy phrase, 'extremely hush.' Neither our friends nor our comrades were to know anything of what we had

in hand, for a careless word might be picked up by a spy, and might jeopardise the success of our undertaking, to say nothing of costing us our lives.

Next day the train took us to our unknown destination—in fact, to Hamburg. At the dockyard, where we were expected, our first surprise awaited us, in the shape of our future abode. Not, as we had imagined, some patrol boat fitted with all the newest devices, but what, to our outpost-boat ideas, looked, as she lay before us in the evening light, a truly imposing vessel. The chorus of exclamations which broke from my gallant fellows showed that they were as agreeably disappointed as I was myself.

She was not, of course, really 'an Atlantic liner,' as one of my men called her, but on account of her lofty upper-works, and of her being completely empty, she stood high out of the water, which considerably increased her apparent size.

The *Libau*—why she received this name will be explained later—was an almost new English steamer. Under the name *Castro* she had formerly belonged to the Wilson Line of Hull, and in the early days of the war she had been brought in as a prize by one of our destroyers.

On board, everything was still in the same condition as when the English crew abandoned her—a welter of oddments of various kinds, hastily pulled-out drawers, papers, and so forth. The engines and boilers, which had been overhauled by the dockyard people, and the living accommodation for officers and men, which had likewise been re-conditioned,

made by contrast a quite satisfactory impression. On the bridge, on the other hand, and in the chart-house—with us the holy-of-holies of every ship—everything was rather neglected-looking. In an English tramp steamer that did not, of course, surprise us.

After the necessary interviews, we formally took over the ship; and a watch was set, to make sure that no unauthorised person found his way on board.

We were to start next morning on the first stage of our voyage, and from now on there was to be no leave, so we had plenty of time to shake down into our new quarters, and with the small quantity of belongings that we had with us that was soon accomplished—except in the case of two of our number. The exceptions were the cook and steward, excellent fellows both, all-round men, who were as useful on deck as in their own domains. These latter, in the *Libau*, were from their point of view of a truly magnificent spaciousness, for in the little outpost-boats they had been accustomed to perform the mysteries of their office in the most cramped of two-by-fours. In stormy weather, up to their knees in water, holding their gear with both hands, and themselves by their eyelashes, they had perforce adapted themselves to a painfully acrobatic existence. Now they could spread themselves to their heart's content; and so they rattled and rummaged, and arranged and re-arranged their possessions, until far into the night.

As for me, as I lay in my bunk that night I could not help recalling how, a bare two years before, while

still fourth-officer of a Lloyd liner, I used often to picture to myself how splendid it would be to be given the command of an ocean-going steamer, while one was still young enough to enjoy it. At that time the goal of my desires seemed infinitely distant. Now I stood on the threshold of their fulfilment.

That night I slept excellently—for the last time for many months.

CHAPTER II

THE MYSTERY SHIP

We sailed on the following day for Wilhelmshaven, to complete our fitting out, and once arrived there, preparations were pushed on apace. Two or three specially picked, trustworthy dockyard hands, carried out such technical work as my own men were not able to deal with. Apart from this, no one was allowed to enter or leave the ship; even officers of the highest rank were refused admission.

We were screened on the landside from curious eyes, as we lay alongside the much higher and larger *Möwe*, which had returned shortly before from her first glorious voyage.

All the material that came on board—and there was a good deal of it—was taken over by my own men on the quay. Thus all was done that possibly could be done to keep everything about the ship secret.

We could not, of course, prevent the 'aura of mystery' with which we surrounded ourselves from arousing the curiosity of neighbouring ships, especially of our former comrades of the Outpost Flotilla, who regarded us with no small wonderment, and probably with no small envy. I had therefore told my people that they were, here and there—of course apparently with

the greatest hesitation and under the usual seal of secrecy—to spread the rumour that we were going to Libau. To confirm this rumour the name *Libau* was painted on our bows. As a matter of fact, I did not yet know myself what our destination really was; but I was already quite certain that in any case it was not Libau.

From now onwards the mystery grew from hour to hour. One of our hatches was battened down, and for the present that hold was not to be entered by any of the ship's company, even including myself. As in Hamburg, so here, it was carefully guarded day and night.

But the most mysterious thing of all was in one of the cabins, where underneath a sofa bunk there was a secret entrance which led, by a series of invisible manholes and concealed ladders, to one of the lower holds. This secret hold reached from side to side of the ship, and there was room in it for about fifty men. One end of it was formed by an iron bulkhead, the other by a wooden dummy bulkhead, which so closely imitated the other, and was so painted, that any one would have taken it for an iron water-tight bulkhead, in which there was no opening. The initiated, however, could, from the inner side, remove a couple of planks, and so make their way out. There was a similar arrangement in a yet lower hold, which, for the present, was filled with a reserve supply of coal, the existence of which was to be concealed during the voyage.

Our mystery ship thus contained no lack of delightful surprises.

CHAPTER III

SIR ROGER CASEMENT AND THE IRISH PLANS

WHILE preparations were thus being pushed forward on board, I myself was ordered up to Berlin, where also various preparations were in train.

There I learned at last something more definite regarding the destination of the *Libau*.

Sir Roger Casement, the well-known leader of the Irish Sinn Feiners, who, as one of the most zealous representatives of the cause of Ireland's liberty, had long been an object of suspicion to the English, was now in Germany.

Casement, who was a fiery patriot, and cherished a deadly hatred for England, believed that the world-war had at length brought the opportunity to deliver his country from the age-long oppression of the English. The favourable military situation of the Central Powers at that time justified the hope that they would be victorious. If, then, the Irish people made up its mind to rise against England, and had sufficient tenacity, and a sufficient supply of arms and ammunition, to maintain the struggle, the existing situation was undoubtedly the most favourable for the realisation of Ireland's hopes, that Ireland had ever had—or ever will have.

Roger Casement, as appears from his earlier writings, had years before foreseen this world-war, and the opportunity for Ireland that it would bring in its train. Long a friend and admirer of Germany, co-operation with Germany seemed to him the only hope of deliverance for his country. He had, therefore, both before and during the war, been carrying on by speech and writing a vigorous propaganda in support of this idea. According to his own statements, he had behind him a great part of the Irish people; this was the so-called 'Sinn Fein Party.'

The driving force behind the whole movement, however, was supplied—doubtless on account of their greater liberty of action—by the partisans of the Irish Republican cause in the United States.

The principal representatives of these Irish-Americans had, some time before, approached the German ambassador in Washington, Count Bernstorff, with the urgent request that he would forward their plea for German military support for the projected rising in Ireland.

The desired support, in the form of a landing of troops, had to be refused by Germany; but, on the other hand, Germany declared herself willing, after carefully examining the situation, to fall in with Count Bernstorff's proposal to the extent of sending a ship with arms and munitions to Ireland. This would, on the one hand, give solid proof of Germany's willingness to help the oppressed Irish. On the other hand, it was hoped that an Irish rising, if energetically carried out, would not only bring to the Irish the realisation

of their hopes, but would shorten the war by several months. The assumption was that England would be compelled to withdraw from the front great masses of troops and material, in order to cope with the insurrection.

A simultaneous naval demonstration on the east coast of England was to create a favourable opportunity for the landing of the arms, by diverting attention from the west of Ireland.

The questions which had to be considered were, first, whether the ship would be able to run the blockade and succeed in landing her cargo, and, second, whether the Irish would be sufficiently vigorous and energetic to carry out the rising successfully.

Neither question could be answered with certainty. Accordingly, both the ship's mission and the rising planned in connection therewith, from the first involved a large element of risk. Either undertaking without the active support of the other would be purposeless, because fore-doomed to failure.

In view of the return of the *Möwe*, which had succeeded in getting home shortly before, and the attempted break-through, still more recently, of the auxiliary cruiser *Greif*, which the English had unfortunately caught, we had now to reckon on the blockade being still further tightened up. The prospects for my blockade-running enterprise were anything but rosy. The more so as the attempt had to be made at a time when the moon was nearing the full. The Irish had insisted that the rising must take place at Easter, which had for the Catholic Irish so very special

a significance, and against Easter in the calendar stood the words 'Full Moon'—the very last thing I could have wished for at the time when I should be approaching land.

Casement, who, of course, was in the closest possible touch with his fellow-countrymen across the water, had, in consultation with them already, taken the most necessary steps in Germany.[1]

The plan had therefore been discussed in all its bearings, and was fully communicated to me at various interviews with Sir Roger Casement. I now knew, therefore, that I had been selected for an enterprise which called for a very high degree both of vigour and of circumspection. It can be understood that I was well pleased.

[1] It may be expressly pointed out here that Germany was fully justified, according to the provisions of the Law of Nations, in giving the desired support to the Irish.—Author's note.

CHAPTER IV

'MYSTERY' CARGO AND CAMOUFLAGE EQUIPMENT

As Casement had expressed a very strong objection against accompanying us in the *Libau*, it was finally decided to place a submarine at his disposal. He had with him two companions, Lieutenant Monteith and the Irish sergeant, Bailey. The latter turned out in the sequel to be a thorough-paced scoundrel. The submarine was to put Casement, with his companions, on board the *Libau* at a rendezvous in Tralee Bay, and I was then to proceed in under his instructions.

As a still further precaution against the aims and destination of the *Libau* becoming known, it had also been decided that I was on the following day to leave Wilhelmshaven and proceed to the Baltic. The goods-trains with our cargo of arms and munitions, which had been waiting for days on the sidings of various stations in Central Germany, without the railway authorities knowing anything about their destination, were, the following night, ordered by telegram to Lübeck, so that they arrived almost at the same time as we did.

By two o'clock in the afternoon we were on our way down the Jade. Officers in command of

guardships and barriers had had orders to let us pass without hindrance or delay.

Off the 'Roter Sand' lighthouse, which so often in thick weather had given us guidance—not seldom at the very last moment—the first metamorphosis took place. The secret hatchway was opened and a couple of large boxes brought up, the contents of which we proceeded to spread out on deck. These consisted of complete outfits of clothing for the crew; Norwegian uniforms, *i.e.* plain blue suits, caps, sweaters, linen, etc., all genuine down to the smallest detail. Even the black buttons were stamped with the name of a Norwegian firm!

In a few minutes the dressing-up was complete, and the result was not without its comic side, for, while some of us looked very like Scandinavians, others looked like nothing on earth, for of course not all the garments were adapted to the size of the wearers. One of the stokers, a tall Bavarian, asked indignantly why the stokers did not get fine big knives like the seamen. When I explained to him that these were only for work, and that later on all would have proper daggers and pistols, he was visibly reassured. One consequence of this metamorphosis was that henceforward all military smartness of bearing and movement had to be dropped, for in order to be able to play our parts properly we must gradually accustom ourselves to tramp-ship ways. I had supposed that this would come easy to the men, but that was not the case; and I must say that, desirable as it was under present circumstances, I

could not help being pleased to see how extraordinarily difficult it was to get rid of the military polish. I was sorry my former chief was not there to observe it. However, they learned in time to drop the heel-clicking, call me Cap'n, instead of 'Herr Leutnant,' talk a low German lingo that might pass, at a pinch, for Norwegian, and let their beards grow.

We signalled good-bye to a group of outpost boats on their way in, and once more entered the Elbe. In the night we passed through the Kiel Canal. Next morning saw us off the Bulk lightship, and a little later we steamed, in glorious spring weather, through the Fehmarn Sound. A few hours later we were in Lübeck.

In calling on the firm of shipping agents which had been entrusted with the loading and outfitting of the *Libau*, I decided to assume my rôle of merchant captain, but the first attempt was something of a fiasco. Clad in the go-ashore kit proper to my status, I entered the private office of the firm, only to be greeted with a respectful 'Good morning, Commander' —a nasty jolt! I stuck to it, however, and the interview passed through various stages of incredulity, indignation at my avoidance of military service, and irritation at my boorish manners. In the end, however, we understood each other excellently, and I here record with gratitude the valuable aid I received from the firm and their confidential employees in the fitting out of the *Libau*.

The main difficulty was the stowage of the cargo. Even allowing for the quantities of coal and water

which would be used in the course of the voyage, the draft which we were not to exceed at our arrival in Ireland was extremely small; and the cargo, in order to be capable of being, if necessary, quickly got out, with very little in the way of help and appliances, had to be stored in a manner contrary to accepted principles and usages. As a result of that, the *Libau* was so top-heavy that if we encountered stormy weather, there was a great danger of her capsizing. I had perforce, therefore, to make up my mind to increase the dead-weight, which was already considerable, by another two hundred tons of coal. That had, on the other hand, the advantage that I might quite possibly find an excellent use for this 'ballast' later, and how necessary it was, for the immediate purpose the sequel was to show. Without it we should infallibly have been lost off the Rockalls.

As with all the people that we were obliged to employ, the stevedore's men were all carefully chosen. After coal, provisions, water, and so forth had been put on board, they got to work on the stowage of the cargo. Piece by piece had to be lowered into the hold with the greatest care, lest any of the cases should break, for it was highly important that no one should know what was in them. The cases were, for this reason, marked with the usual black and red shippers' marks. The men must, of course, have smelt a rat, for what could be the object of sending to sea at this time a German cargo-steamer with piece-goods marked with names like Genoa and Naples? In any case, I thought it as well to put it abroad here, too, that the

Libau was going to Libau! Of course, this was whispered under the strictest seal of secrecy, for then we could be sure that it would go all round the town. I myself let out once in conversation that I was going to take troops aboard in Libau, which were to carry out a 'coup' in Finland. That sounded quite credible. No later than next morning I was asked confidentially by one of the gentlemen who had to do with the fitting-out, whether it was true that I was going to embark troops at Libau for Finland; it was, he said, being reported in the town. Imagine my astonishment! I could only hope that the rumour would come to the ears of some English spies, and if in addition the Russians were on the look-out for us at Libau, then everything was in the best possible train.

And now there suddenly appeared in the living-rooms of the *Libau* all sorts of genuine Norwegian equipment, whenever possible stamped with the name of a firm; and even Norwegian books and the latest Christiania papers. It was a pity, but it could not be avoided, that a number of Scandinavian ships were lying in harbour with us. All suspicious objects of any kind were now packed away in the hold with the 'entrance through the sofa bunk,' the 'conjurer's box,' as the men christened it.

This 'conjurer's box' was to be very useful to us later. The whole of the German equipment, which we had to have with us but were obliged during the voyage to keep hidden from prying eyes—uniforms, arms, explosive and incendiary bombs, all German nautical instruments, books, charts, flags (including

the numerous flags of foreign nations which we might have to use)—all found their way into this compartment.

We had supplies enough, all told, to keep us easily for six months—with the exception of coal, of course, which was calculated to last forty-five days.

The lavishness of our equipment was in part due to the fact that we had to have two or three sets of almost all articles of everyday use—German, English, and, above all, Norwegian—from the compass down to the smallest sardine-tin. In case the ship should be searched, any small object of German origin, even a trouser-button with the name of a German firm stamped on it, might serve to betray us.

Nothing was lacking. We even carried one of the curiously shaped Norwegian whalers on deck. Arms, tools of every kind, electric pocket-lamps, surgical dressings, a plentiful supply of bunting, colours, brushes, and sail cloth, with which the appearance of the ship could be altered as required, wood and cement for various purposes, bed-linen, curtains, and crockery, in short, everything, just of the kind used on Norwegian ships, was provided.

It need hardly be mentioned that we also possessed one or two German naval ensigns and pendants. All tubs, chests, and tins of preserved meat that bore Norwegian inscriptions, were assigned places in particularly conspicuous positions.

We were especially well-found in the matter of ship's papers. Besides German papers for our own consulates in neutral countries, which might eventually

come in useful, we had an excellently assorted stock of Norwegian Ship's logs and Engine-room logs, Articles, Certificates, Manifests, Bills of Lading, etc., on board, which served to authenticate the ship, crew, and cargo, and whose genuineness was beyond suspicion. In addition, there were a number of letters, including one of particular interest from my hypothetical owners in Bergen. In this I was requested, before leaving Christiania, to take on board with all speed a consignment of pit-props for Cardiff, which had arrived at the last moment, and on which my owners, in view of the keen demand in England, expected to make a handsome profit. My owners also urged me strongly, in contravention of the English regulations, not to follow the usual steamer track, but to make a point of keeping clear of it, since it was precisely on this track that the German submarines had lately been making such terrible havoc. This letter might serve —provided I found the right kind of idiot to work it off on—or at least might help, to explain the unusual route which I was to follow.

After the main cargo, consisting of arms and munitions, had been got on board, we proceeded to the stowing of the 'camouflage cargo.' This consisted, in addition to the above-mentioned pit-props, of tin baths, enamelled steel ware in cases, wooden doors, window frames, and similar useful articles. These all bore shippers' marks, indicating their destination as Genoa or Naples. It need hardly be mentioned that only this camouflage cargo appeared on the manifest and bills of lading, for its mission in life was

to distract attention from our other and dangerous cargo. For this reason also it was stored above the other cargo, in such a way that it could only be moved with the greatest difficulty, and it was only after penetrating several feet down that one came to the munitions.

While these operations had been going on below, my first mate and his men had been busily engaged in giving the ship the appearance of a common tramp. Everywhere, both on hull and upper-works, shone patches of red-lead, the number of which is generally in inverse proportion to the size of the ship. To be in character, no stress was laid henceforward on cleanliness or order.

The name *Libau* had been painted out. Now that the rumour about our intended landing in Finland had got round, it could, of course, cause no surprise that we should conceal our name, for fear of Russian spies!

Meanwhile I had spent several days in Berlin, where all sorts of important matters had still to be settled. It was even yet not certain that the expedition would take place at all. In twenty-four hours more, however, it was to be decided. Heavily laden with packages of all kinds, I locked myself in, by way of precaution, in a reserved carriage, and left Berlin accompanied by the best wishes of those interested in the success of our voyage. On the very evening of my return, I received telegraphic orders to proceed to sea. Thank Heavens, the uncertainty was over at last.

Next morning we were ready for sea. The time of sailing I had, for certain reasons, fixed at six p.m. As the very last item in our equipment there was brought on board at midday a large dog, of quite 'unquestionable' breed. Old and decrepit as he was, he was nevertheless a dog; and a dog is a thing that a tramp steamer cannot be without. So I had hastily purchased him at the last moment.

The one thing still lacking to our completeness was some kind of knowledge of the Norwegian tongue! For that we must look to the help of Providence, not to mention—supposing the next few days allowed us time—a pocket vocabulary which I had provided, to be on the safe side. The absence of this linguistic knowledge could not disturb our confidence; at the worst one could make shift to carry it off with 'Platt-Deutsch.'[1] The English are no great heroes in the linguistic field. If it should be our lot to be examined later on by an English ship which did not happen to have a Norwegian interpreter on board—though that, of course, was a possibility on the Norwegian coast—it was possible the bluff might come off.

[1] The Low-German dialect which is the 'home-tongue' of many of the German seamen. It certainly sounds sufficiently different from ordinary German to pass muster with an untrained ear as a different language.

CHAPTER V

THE 'LIBAU' SAILS—AND BECOMES THE 'AUD'

THE clock in the neighbouring church-tower was clanging out the last of its six vigorous strokes as the *Libau*, under the mercantile flag, hauled out from the quay. A pleasant Sunday calm lay over the harbour. That the start took place on a Sunday was regarded by my men, according to an ancient sailors' superstition, as a good omen.

Travemünde was passed shortly before dark, and, as we took farewell of the friendly little town, the engine-room telegraph rang for 'full speed ahead.' The voyage into the unknown had begun.

I now made the crew acquainted, so far as was absolutely necessary, with the purpose of the voyage. For the present I said nothing of our course, or destination, and I avoided naming any names, that the men might know only so much as the situation demanded.

I did this in the men's own interest, so that if they were taken prisoners they could truthfully say that they knew nothing. The next thing was to give each of them a Norwegian name and rating. The pronunciation of their names gave some of them considerable difficulty, but I insisted that henceforth no German

names were to be used, that the men might become thoroughly accustomed to their new character.

The enthusiasm with which, for all their astonishment, the crew received my explanations, gave me confidence that I had made no mistake in my choice.

Our next care was to see that all articles in common use, clothing, flags, books, instruments, which all had too brand-new an appearance, were made to look as aged and venerable as befitted their importance. More especially, of course, did that apply to the ship's papers, the various letters and other evidences of the genuineness of our assumed character. A smoky candle to brown the documents, some dust from under a floor-mat rubbed in carefully with the palm of the hand, some oil and grease marks dabbed on with a ball of cotton-waste from the engine-room, these were the uninviting but effective means that we used in the operation. Frequent folding and crumpling of the papers gave the finishing touches.

The books received specially artistic treatment, for, according to the age which they had to live up to, we threw them one or more times upon the floor, dog-eared the corners, and loosened some of the leaves. My men developed a remarkable skill in working up their 'discharges,' and these were, before long, torn, dirty, and mended up with sticking plaster. It went to our hearts to subject to the like treatment our beautiful new kits, but stains of tar and paint, and some roughly put on patches, soon made them unrecognisable.

The cult of the beard had already made encouraging

progress. In cases where it was too slow, we supplemented it a little with oil and coal dust.

On the hatches I had dozens of chalk marks, so called tally marks, and numbers painted on, as though the checkers had been very zealous in their office. Empty Norwegian preserved-meat tins and old Christiania newspapers were strewn about in the cabins. In short, we spared no effort to give our ship and ourselves an appearance corresponding to our assumed character; and enjoyed ourselves mightily in the process. Now that the tense expectation and uncertainty of the last few days had relaxed, and that the men knew what was at stake, and how many thousands of people were eagerly and anxiously awaiting the arrival of the *Libau*, they were almost wild with delight. No one thought about the dangers that lay before us. A single desire animated us all. 'On, on, into the enemy's territory; and then home again, covered with glory.' With such a splendid crew one could cheerfully face the devil himself!

About midnight I came to anchor off Warnemünde. The weather had unfortunately changed for the worse. The rising sea compelled me to alter my original plan of going through the Sound as a Swede and only becoming a Norwegian in the Kattegat. Owing to the difficulties of altering the paint work, that was only possible in good weather. I was obliged, therefore, to assume the Norwegian mask at once. There was no sleep for any one that night. Stages were slung over each side of the ship, and several men swarmed down, and, by the light of their electric

pocket-lamps, painted the name, *Aud-Norge* in letters a yard and a half long on the sides.

The work was unfortunately often interrupted by the passing of steamers and fishing craft, at whose approach we had to put out our electric lamps, and other difficulties were caused by the rising sea, which often dashed over the stages and wet us up to our chests, and—worst of all—washed out at one sweep our laborious efforts with the brush. Undaunted, however, and stimulated by a couple of tots of spirits to keep out the cold, we stuck to our posts; for by morning the work must be done. And done it was. When the first streak of dawn appeared, the *Aud*, rocking contentedly to the Baltic swell, was ready to the last paint stroke.

CHAPTER VI

UNDER FALSE COLOURS

THE Norwegian flag was flying gaily at the stern, when, after sunrise, the *Aud* weighed anchor.

At first we found ourselves distinctly amusing in our new rôle.

Every one went about in the most leisurely fashion possible (for on a tramp no one is ever in a hurry), rolling a little in our gait, pulling vigorously at a short pipe, and spitting with seamanlike skill to the four quarters of the heavens. Our hands, of course, were buried as deep as possible in our pockets.

After passing the Gjedser lightship, we laid a course for Falsterbö. The lifeboats from now on hung outboard, partly for our own safety and partly because it was customary at that time. There was still a great deal to be done that day, for before midnight I expected to be in enemy waters.

Before that, all the preparations had to be completed which were necessary in case of encountering the enemy. In order to be able at a moment's notice to blow up the ship, I had a large quantity of explosives placed in a suitable position, and built up round them a small casing of cement about three feet wide. The greater the resistance, the greater would be the effect

of the explosion. The wire by means of which it was to be detonated was carried round various corners and angles to the upper-deck, where it was carefully concealed from prying eyes. To avoid any risk from carelessness, I had the fuses kept in a different place.

For our own weapons, ammunition, and tools, we sought out, on deck and below, the hiding-places which seemed most secure, both from damp and discovery. In case of a prize-crew being put on board, we intended to make an effort to overpower them.

In this connection our cook had a brilliant idea. On the assumption that he would be left free—for even the fiercest Englishman must eat—he hid a quantity of weapons and crowbars under a heap of ashes in a disused furnace, and preened himself not a little on the prospect of being able to set free the rest of us.

In the end there was not a spot in the whole ship, from bridge to bunkers, where there was not some kind of instrument of destruction ready to hand. Naval flags and pendants were concealed in a similar way.

A generous provision of alcoholic beverages was a simpler matter. With an ample supply everywhere at hand—good White Horse whisky and fine old brandy at that—in half-filled bottles invitingly open, we judged that it might be quite possible to deal with a prize crew without unnecessary bloodshed.

The next thing was to work out what may be called an 'emergency-station drill.' Ordinarily, that means the assignment of each member of the crew to his special

post on such occasions as the outbreak of fire, 'man overboard,' and the like. For us it was highly important to have in addition our functions allotted for such emergencies as 'enemy ship in sight.' It would then be necessary to conceal as speedily as possible all German sextants, telescopes, charts, log-books, and other requisites of navigation, and substitute for them the corresponding Norwegian material. At the first alarm, therefore, all these suspicious objects had to be bundled into a big bag which hung on the bridge for the purpose. One of the seamen then sprinted across with it to the galley, where the cook stood ready to take it and pass it along to the secret chamber. There, at the ladder, the steward was ready to provide for its ultimate disappearance. All this could be done within two minutes.

Meanwhile the decks and engine-room were 'cleared for action.' Mathiesen, who knew a little Danish and was rather Scandinavian-looking, took the wheel on the bridge, in order, if need be, to exchange rôles with the officer of the watch. A mate's uniform hung for this purpose in the chart-house.

One of the stokers had the pleasing task of sitting, with the greatest attainable abandon, on the fore-hatch, lazily smoking his pipe and teasing the dog till it barked furiously. The rest of the crew, with the exception of the engineers and stokers on duty, had to disappear quickly and quietly from the deck, crawl into their bunks, and pretend to be asleep.

The whole thing was admirably successful. Any one observing from a distance the picture of peaceful

innocence presented by our dingy-looking tramp could not possibly have seen anything to arouse suspicion. Special signals—either passed quietly from mouth to mouth or communicated by voice-pipe and engine-room telegraph—were arranged in case, with a prize crew already on board, it might become necessary to sink the ship. The word *Tyske*, Norwegian for 'German,' meant 'Stand by with the naval ensign, uniforms, and arms!' The further commands, to carry on, and to make the attack, were varied according to circumstances. The Norwegian phrase meaning 'Pedersen is to come to the captain,' signified: 'Stand by to blow up the ship! Fuse ready!' The order, 'Stop!' given three times in succession with the engine-room telegraph, meant, 'Fire the mine!' This drill we practised, if possible, daily.

We had now, with frequent alterations of course, made our way along the Danish coast as far as Falsterbö, where there was an extensive mine and ship barrier. The place was swarming with war vessels of every kind. An outpost-boat gave us our course through the barrier.

CHAPTER VII

A DRESS REHEARSAL

'DESTROYER coming up astern,' some one on the boat-deck shouted up to the bridge. A moment later we heard the familiar rush of a destroyer's bow-wave, and the ringing of her telegraph as she checked. What the devil do they want?'

'Where are you from, captain,' comes a voice from below us.

A sub-lieutenant is standing, megaphone in hand, on the bridge of the pitching craft, whose funnels are only just on a level with our upper deck. Close as she is to us, all the officers of the watch are scanning us curiously through their glasses, while the men standing about the deck stare at us open-eyed. As it is just as well that we should not be recognised, I give my men a sign to go below, and myself take my stand at the rail, shaking my head, to convey to the sub-lieutenant that the German language is not one of my accomplishments.

'Of course,' I can hear the little man below grumbling to himself, 'another of these idiots of captains who can speak no civilised language!'

Nevertheless, he had another try, shouting at me

through the megaphone in a rasping tone, 'Where are you from? Can't you answer?'

Again I relentlessly shook my head, though it was all I could do not to laugh outright when I recognised the speaker's voice. I had talked to him in the streets of Kiel a couple of days before.

'Nothing doing!' he growled angrily to himself, and said something to a signalman, who thereupon ran aft, and returned accompanied by a lieutenant, who had obviously been awakened from his siesta.

'Hallo, capt'n,' he shouted to me in fluent English,[1] 'where are you coming from?'

'Danzig,' I answered shortly.

'Where are you bound for?'

'Christiania.'

In the ensuing pause I turned round and pretended to play with the dog, by way of showing that I had no use for any further conversation with the destroyer.

Meanwhile, I could hear the little sub saying crossly, 'I'll be hanged if the fellow's on the square. I'll swear there's something fishy about the business.'

I gave an impatient pull to my gay-coloured scarf, and nonchalantly knocked out my foul little pipe on the rail, so that the ash flew right into the eyes of the two speakers.

'Boor!' was the only further word that I heard, for a second afterwards the destroyer backed astern, came up again on our port side, and steamed along

[1] English being much more often understood by Norwegian captains than German. When the author quotes English, it is given exactly as he writes it.

abreast of us for a while, all eyes on our deck, and on the shining paint of the flags and names on our side.

Mathiesen, who now shoved his Norwegian-looking visage into the foreground, must have allayed the suspicions of the wary pair, for a sudden shout of 'All right, captain,' accompanied by a wave of the hand, gave me to understand that I might proceed.

We had passed our first test safely. Some five hundred yards beyond the barrier, a small Danish steamer flying a pilot-flag, came steaming towards us. Here was our first real risk. I knew that no merchant ships were allowed to pass through the Flintrinne and the Sound without taking a pilot, and I had therefore already discussed with my officers what we should do about it. If we took a pilot, it would be impossible to keep up the pretence of being Norwegians for the whole time—amounting to several hours—that he would be with us. On the other hand, if we refused his services, it might be taken as certain that his suspicions would be aroused; unless we had the luck to meet a particularly stupid one.

After long deliberation I resolved, however, to back our luck and take the latter course, and the luck held.

Long before he got near us, I made signs to indicate that I did not want a pilot. Our friend, however, who no doubt meant to get a whacking fee out of us, was very determined about it; and gave us to understand, with a fine flow of language and gesticulation, that he was coming on board whether or no. My chief engineer meanwhile saw to it that he should have all

he could do to keep up with us. To prevent his getting in the first word, I took the megaphone and shouted to him in English, the 'universal language' of seafaring men, 'I don't want a pilot, I know the water here!' The only result was that the good man became more clamorous than ever, and indicated the exact point on the side at which he wanted a ladder let down for him.

To get rid of his importunity, Mathiesen had at last to shout to him in Danish, 'We don't need you, we know the channel!' Then I sheered off a bit to port, and our friend, at length recognising the futility of his efforts, steamed away, cursing and shaking his fist. We saw him making at full speed for the Danish lightship at the entrance to the Flintrinne.

'By Jove, I expect that's torn it,' remarked my second, watching him through his glasses. I had to acknowledge that he might be right. The Danes were at that time notoriously anti-German, and the lightship had a wireless installation. If the fellows wanted to set a trap for us, they had only to report promptly to the English, 'Suspicious steamer passed, proceeding out on a northerly course,' and we should be quite certain, within five hours after passing Helsingborg, to make the acquaintance of an English cruiser. To add to our disquietude, it was no long time before we overhauled in the narrow channel a Danish schooner, which had lain close astern of us at the quays of Lübeck, what time we were still a German steamer!

However, we should need luck to get through in

any case, and a risk less or more was nothing to be downhearted about. . . .

Copenhagen and Malmö, with their great pools of light, are now far behind us. As we meet the fresh breeze at the entrance to the Kattegat, a barquentine, under full sail, glides past us without a sound.

She carries no lights, and the ghostly outline of her bellying canvas is dimly silhouetted against the moonless sky. In a few seconds she has disappeared in the deep darkness.

But what is that? The lines of a torpedo-boat show up to port; the rays of a pair of searchlights dart through the air and disappear again. Then another flash sweeps upward, the cone growing larger and larger. Now he has us; on the decks of the *Aud* it is light as day, our eyes are blinded for the moment. A few seconds of this and the cone disappears again as quickly as it came.

The Danish torpedo-boat that guards the entrance of the sound, to protect Danish neutrality, has held us for a moment under the magnifying glass, so to speak, to examine our distinctive markings—and has passed us as a harmless neutral.

CHAPTER VIII

IN ENEMY WATERS

A QUARTER of an hour after passing the torpedo-boat we had crossed the three-mile limit, and were in enemy territory.[1]

We kept a sharp look-out, for at any moment now we might run across an English cruiser, destroyer, or submarine.

English submarines had, in fact, been sighted a few days before, in company with outpost-boats, between Lasö and the Sound, while between Skagen and Göteborg, in the Skager-Rack, and on the Norwegian coast, especially off Lindesnaes and Jäderen, numerous English war-vessels, including both cruisers and destroyers, had been reported.

About two o'clock we were some five miles east of the island of Anholt, and at this point we had to make a critical decision.

Shortly before, the English had issued a notice, which *ordered* all *neutral* steamers to follow a course within ten miles distance of the Scandinavian coast, the object being to facilitate the examination of

[1] It is interesting to note the admission from such a source that 'England's frontiers are the shores of the enemy'—or the nearest point thereto that is outside neutral waters.

shipping by the English warships. The small neutral nations were powerless to resist. The only 'neutral' which at that time dared to defy the English order was the Norwegian steamer *Aud*.

I had two good reasons for my decision: first, that to follow the Swedish coast meant a great waste of time, second, that the English would never, I felt sure, imagine that any neutral would have the hardihood to ignore their order. It was therefore natural to suppose that the principal part of their patrol forces would be concentrated in the immediate neighbourhood of the coast. By taking a course through the middle of the Kattegat and Skager-Rack, we should gain twenty-four hours, and probably escape a strict examination, which would also take up a good deal of time.

I therefore held a course for the present midway between the island of Lasö and Göteborg, intending to strike into the Skager-Rack higher up, northward of Paternoster. This course had, however, one great disadvantage. Supposing we were caught while on it, no amount of ingenious lying would help us, for all our papers were valid only from Christiania outwards, since that was our ostensible port of sailing.

Once more we had to trust our luck. The risk was, after all, not greater than in following the other course, with the chance of being vetted, by 'mark of the mouth,' by an English-Norwegian interpreter.

As soon as we were out of sight of land and of other ships, I rang down the order for 'Full speed ahead.'

The main thing now was to get as quickly as possible upon a course which would make it credible that we had sailed from Christiania. If we were caught in the meantime, the game was up; if not, we had won the first trick. So—drive ahead!

Towards morning the wind dropped and became very uncertain, while the sky was almost completely overcast. To the west and north-west there was already a slight haze upon the water: the forerunner of a coming fog. If there was any one in the wide world who had reason to hope for a fog at that moment it was myself. We all stood on deck watching anxiously every slightest alteration in the weather. The watch below found they had no need for sleep that day. From minute to minute it grew thicker. Contrary to my previous intention, therefore, I stood in nearer the Swedish coast in order to get our exact 'position' by shore-bearings. It was quite possible that I might have no further chance of doing so for several days, for I had decided, when we reached the North Sea, to continue steaming out of sight of land, since, on the whole of the Norwegian coast up to a point northward of Bergen, numerous English patrolling vessels had been reported.

It must have been about 8 a.m. when the look-out aloft reported a ship ahead. A few minutes later we made her out to be a small cruiser of one of the older types.

I gave the order for emergency stations, and in a moment every man was at his allotted post. It was impossible, at the distance, to read the cruiser's small

and rather weather-beaten flag, and we were bound to assume that she was English.

If so, what was to happen? There was nothing whatever in our papers that would serve to account for our presence in this neighbourhood. Suddenly, I had an inspiration. 'Stand by to hoist the quarantine flag,' I ordered, and signalled for 'half speed!' Then I told the men my plan. Every man who was not wanted on deck must wrap up his neck warmly and creep into his bunk. We on the bridge, too, wrapped ourselves in thick cloaks and wound great comforters round our necks. If the supposed Englishman looked as if he meant to approach us, I intended to run up the quarantine flag and signal to him that we were from Danzig, bound for Christiania, and had diphtheria on board. Perhaps I might ask him to give warning of our arrival in Christiania. In these circumstances he would certainly avoid coming on board. For the moment we should be safe; the rest we must leave to luck. As an extra precaution I had a bottle of carbolic poured over the deck, to provide the appropriate sick-bay odour.

The cruiser approached us at high speed. In ten minutes she would close us. It is a tense moment, for everything now hangs on the success of our stratagem. Suddenly she turns sharply on to a north-easterly course, the whole of her flag becomes visible, and reveals to our eager eyes the Swedish colours.

A weight fell from our hearts. In the twinkling of an eye the sick were whole, and the various

objects which had disappeared into the 'conjurer's box' were speedily restored to the light of day. The dress-rehearsal had been a complete success.

Shortly after, we sighted, right astern of the steamer, the little island of Paternoster, to which we gave a wide berth to avoid inquiries from the signal station. At the same time, the coastline loomed up through the fog to starboard. I had now, if I wanted it, a good 'fix,' but I decided to take my 'departure' farther north, just before the big alteration of course to westward.

By midday we had made sufficient northing to be able to steer a course from that point right through the middle of the Skager-Rack.

A bearing from a lighthouse on the mainland, in conjunction with a sounding taken at the same time, enabled us to prick our position on the chart with great precision; and then we headed westward at full speed. If the thick weather only held for another six hours, we should be able to say, with a bold front, that we hailed from Christiania.

The 'cherub that sits up aloft' must have meant well by us, for the fog not only held, but thickened.

No need to spur the engine-room staff to special efforts. They knew how much now depended upon speed, and gave the engines every ounce that they would stand. About three o'clock we were abreast of Skagen, and I put her on a south-westerly course.

To avoid collision in the fog, we had nothing to depend on but our eyes and ears, for naturally I dispensed with the use of the siren. On the decks there was absolute silence. Nothing was to be heard but the gurgle of the water at the bow, and the monotonous beat of the pistons, as we drove steadily through the fog at a good twelve knots.

For two hours we ran like that, and then all at once a high, dark bulk loomed out of the fog right ahead, a bark under full sail.

'Hard a-starboard!' The wheel flew round at lightning speed. For a long moment it looked as if the manœuvre would not succeed, for the *Aud* answered but slowly to her helm. Fortunately, however, the sailing ship had also realised the situation and put her helm hard over, and we cleared each other in the end with fifty yards to spare. The bark was flying a red rag of bunting which must once have represented a Norwegian flag, and we gave our 'countrymen' a cheer as they went by.

Towards evening we had made such good way that we could quite well pose as being outward bound from Christiania; and from now on we had to start keeping a Norwegian log-book, for that, too, might well be subjected to examination. There were two of these logs, one for the navigation and one for the engine-room. We had, therefore, starting from the present position of the ship, to calculate back and find out at what hour the *Aud* left Christiania, and when and where we dropped pilot what's-his-name, and so

forth. This information was entered under the appropriate headings.

Our real course, positions, speeds, coal consumption, etc., would, of course, in the future be quite different from those which the Norwegian log-books had to show, and the 'cooking' of these logs became later quite a difficult task.

It was my first introduction to the mysteries of 'Book-keeping by Double Entry.'

CHAPTER IX

THE FIRST SIGN OF THE ENEMY

Towards nine o'clock there set in, unfortunately, a marked change of weather. A light wind from the west gradually dispersed the fog, so that it soon became quite clear, with good visibility.

The moon had already risen, but considerately remained hidden behind a cloud, so that the silhouette of our ship was not very distinct.

Towards midnight, we reckoned, we should be abreast of Lindesnaes. Here we expected to find the coast most closely watched by the English, since all traffic, whether from north, east, or west, must pass this south-western corner of Norway. In order not to arouse unnecessary suspicion, I ordered the mast-head light and side-lights to be lighted. But before doing so, I had the lenses rubbed over with lamp-black, so that the lights could scarcely have been visible a few ship's lengths away.

We could thus, at any rate, say that we had our lamps burning, and throw the blame of their condition upon the lamp-trimmer. In the rest of the ship all lights were carefully screened.

Hour after hour of anxious waiting went by—another half-hour, another quarter, and we shall

have Lindesnaes right abeam. Shall we get through unobserved?

We were spared the trouble of answering that question. Suddenly there was a flash to northward, and directly over the horizon there appeared one after another, one, two, three, four searchlights, making criss-cross patterns with their beams. Time after time they grazed us. When one of them suddenly rested a moment on us, we thought we were seen, but no; for a few seconds later it released us again and illuminated the water astern of us. Then another came sweeping round, and yet another. This merry game went on for perhaps five minutes, but that brief span seemed to us like an eternity, for every moment we expected a shot across our bows as a gentle hint to us to stop. But nothing happened.

It was only when the beams began to concentrate on a spot some distance to the east of us, and then climbed up into the heavens that we breathed freely once more.

After that I extinguished my lights again, and steered north-west for the open sea.

From that time forward, a point which I always took into consideration in laying my courses was that I should always be at least a day's steaming distant from the famous Kirkwall Harbour, to which the English sent in all suspicious ships. I counted that if we should be caught and a prize crew put on board of us, within the twenty-four hours we could find ways and means of dealing with our uninvited guests, and recapturing our ship.

The next day passed without any greater excitements than those provided by an encounter with a couple of suspicious-looking Dutch fishing-boats. and a Norwegian steamer. The latter evidently did not fancy the looks of her fellow-countryman, for she took to her heels, belching forth volumes of the blackest smoke that her furnaces could produce, and only resumed her course after giving us a very wide berth. We found it rather an agreeable interlude to figure as hunter instead of quarry.

CHAPTER X

SOME EXCITEMENTS

We were now four days out, and the most we had seen of the 'Grand Fleet' of the English was a couple of searchlights.

I had been on the bridge all night, and had turned in for a short rest, when I was awakened by a loud tramping and shouting on deck.

'Smoke cloud on the port beam!' What could that be? Well, of course, it might be a trader, but it was just as likely to be a warship, for we were now approaching the Shetland cordon.

For a quarter of an hour there was nothing to be seen but a great mass of smoke, which grew sometimes fainter and sometimes stronger. For a while it looked as if it was produced by several funnels. To make sure, I sent my first officer up to the fore-top with an excellent Zeiss glass. A few seconds later he reported a high mast with spotting-top—the funnels were not yet to be made out. A warship, then. The plot began to thicken.

I gave the orders, 'Emergency stations, Course NE., Engine-room staff to reduce smoke.' A course to the east of NE. was, for the present, not advisable, for it was quite possible that there might be other

warships in that direction, and it was not yet possible to make out which way the cruiser was heading.

The 'smokeless' stunt we now tried for the first time, and it went much better than we expected. This was the more creditable, because tramp-steamers have no special arrangements for smokeless firing, and the men, who were mostly reservists, had not been trained to it.

The moments that now followed were certainly the most anxious we had yet experienced. The cruiser seemed to be steaming towards us at full speed, for the mast, with its high wireless, could now be seen from our bridge as well as from aloft. 'A second lower mast now visible,' reported the look-out. As he described the relative position of the masts it became evident that the Englishman was heading about north-east. Had he really seen us yet, or not? I gave her four points more to starboard, so that we were now on an easterly course. Perhaps we might still escape.

The great difference in the height of the masts left no doubt that we had here to do with one of the very newest and fastest English cruisers. If she had sighted us, any attempt at flight was useless. But we counted on the English look-out not being as sharp as ours. It is natural that on monotonous outpost duty, cruising to and fro day after day in the same waters and hardly ever seeing anything but the same sea and sky, sky and sea, one's watchfulness should in the end get blunted. And that was just what happened.

A joyful shout from aloft suddenly announced that the cruiser was turning away. As we examined her more closely we could, in fact, see that the high fore-mast, which had originally been visible to the east of the lower mast, now showed to the north-west of it. Evidently the cruiser had turned on to a westerly course, and that meant that she had not sighted us. A short time later, nothing was to be seen of either mast, and soon only a pair of light wisps of smoke lay on the misty horizon. The whole thing had happened so swiftly and surprisingly that we could hardly believe in our good fortune.

On working out our position, I found that we were some seventy-five miles east of the Shetlands. A light bank of mist had now completely hidden the cruiser from us, and as we could see nothing more in any direction, we might conclude with some assurance that she was the easternmost cruiser of that outpost line which, a few weeks before, had almost proved disastrous to the returning *Möwe*. Only, the chain seemed now to have been lengthened out a little farther to the east. Barring the chance, then, that one or two English vessels were stationed well over towards the Norwegian coast, we might take it that we were already clear of the Shetland cordon, and had successfully eluded the first of the blockading forces, whose special task it was to frustrate just such attempts as ours to break through from the North Sea to the Atlantic.

So far, all well. The next problem was, which of the possible alternative routes we were to follow from

this point onwards. The shortest routes were, of course, those between the Orkneys and the mainland, and between the Shetlands and the Faroe Isles. Both, however, would be very thoroughly watched, and I gave up at once the idea of following either. The much more circuitous route between the Faroes and Ireland meant eight and a half days' steaming, at an average speed of ten knots, before we could reach our destination. Moreover, here lay the main blockading force, consisting of large and powerful auxiliary cruisers, patrolling at short intervals its two hundred miles of open water.

There was yet another alternative, to go right round by the north of Iceland, but the feasibility of this depended on the ice-conditions, and on these I had not been able to get my exact information before sailing.

So much depended upon wind and weather that it would have been foolish to fix my plans unalterably for more than a day ahead, but, on the whole, the route between Iceland and the Faroes seemed to offer the best chance of getting through. I decided, therefore, to steam north, parallel, at a sufficient distance, to the blockading line, and wait for a favourable opportunity of slipping through.

The barometer was high and steady, indicating the continuance of fine weather. The main thing now was to get an accurate observation, for since leaving Paternoster we had no opportunity to get an exact 'fix,' and it was quite possible that the current might have carried us some distance out of our course. But

towards noon the sky was overcast, and a mist lay on the horizon, making it impossible to take an accurate altitude, so there was nothing for it but to stand in towards the coast, in order to determine our position by soundings or by shore-bearings. We headed in, therefore, at full speed for Bremanjerland on the Nordfjord. Almost at the exact point we had calculated on, we got a sounding of the 'hundred-fathom line,' and so determined our longitude. There was now only the latitude to be fixed, and for that luck came to our aid sooner than we had hoped.

About half an hour before midday the fog-bank ahead of us suddenly lifted. A long, low strip of darker gray lay resting on the water. From minute to minute it grew longer and higher, till it became definitely recognisable as land, and the bold outlines of the high, precipitous coastline began to appear. And then—it might have been on the stage, so rapid was the transformation—suddenly the fog broke, as though we had been an enemy charging down upon it, the sun shone through the clouds, and before ten minutes had passed, a panorama of enchanting beauty lay before us.

Out of the clear, deep-blue water, now almost smooth as a mirror, for the wind had dropped, there rose majestically the lofty, snow-covered mountains of Bremanjerland. In the hollows of the mountain-sides, and on the precipitous, jaggedly outlined pinnacles of rock, the snow glistened in the melting rays of the sun. Here and there, runnels of water streamed down over the naked, gray walls of rock

into the sea, or found their way down the deep clefts which ran, darkly outlined as though with black chalk, down the face of the cliffs. To the east, where the mountains were higher, there was a succession of glaciers. One might easily have believed oneself transported to the Alps.

Gradually the numerous islands, which lay like outposts in front of the mainland, became more clearly defined. As there was nothing suspicious to be seen either on land or water—no boat, no human habitation, not even a lighthouse—I held on my course until I was close inshore. Then, with the aid of the charts and sailing directions, which give good silhouettes of this part of the coast, I was soon able to get my exact position.

The sudden change in the weather had, of course, played the deuce with my plans. It would have been madness to attempt to break through the Shetland blockade in weather so clear as this. I therefore decided to keep at a safe distance from the patrol line, and wait for a change of weather. I laid a course for the point—several hundred miles north-east of the Faroes—at which the Polar Circle intersects the meridian of Greenwich.

CHAPTER XI

ON THE EDGE OF THE ARCTIC SEA

TOWARDS four o'clock of the following day we had reached the point aforesaid. And now it was hard to know what to do, for the air was still clear, the sea glassy-calm, with no indications of an early change.

So far, we had seen no ice, though we were now on the edge of the Arctic Ocean. From that we might conclude that the route north-about round Iceland was not yet practicable, for the ice had not yet broken up.

To run the blockade was, in existing circumstances, hopeless; especially as it was nearing full-moon, and in these high latitudes there was, properly speaking, no night at all. I decided simply to stop the engines, and lie to all the next day. This kind of weather could not last for ever, and the date of my rendezvous gave me a couple of days to play with. For the moment there was not much danger, for no enemy craft was likely to penetrate so far north.

If the English were to have to look out for German ships up here, they might as well extend their outpost-line to the North Pole. In fact, if there was any risk at all, it came from our own submarines, not all of

which could have received a warning about our voyage.

The stopping of the engines enabled some necessary repairs to be carried out, and all the machinery was carefully overhauled, for there was no knowing to what severe tests it might be put before all was done. The deck-hands occupied themselves in repainting the flags and lettering upon our sides, which, owing to the unfavourable conditions in which these works of art had had their birth, had been reduced by weather and water to a confusion of dots and splashes, which might well account for some of the suspicious looks we had encountered.

The day ended with a concert, which my second-officer opened, only too appropriately, with a song beginning, 'Calm lies the sea.'

So pressing was the problem, what we were to do during the next twenty-four hours, that before turning in that night I held a council with my officers in our little mess-room.

The blockade-line, which now lay before us, and which we must break through, unless we were to go north-about round Iceland, was the strongest of all the blockading cordons. We had reason to believe that it was formed by no less than ten to twelve large auxiliary cruisers. The distance from Iceland to the Faroes is, at the narrowest point, about two-hundred nautical miles. Assuming, therefore, that the average speed of these vessels was not more than fifteen knots, it was scarcely to be expected that we could slip through, except in thick fog, for the intervals between

the patrolling cruisers must be very small. Never in my life have I done so much calculating of courses and distances as that night. All available charts and sailing directions were requisitioned, and for hours we bent over the charts with pencil and dividers, calculating, and weighing arguments. In the end we always came back to the point that we *must* make the attempt to break through; for all other alternatives were too unpromising. The conclusion we finally came to was, to make the attempt next day—provided the weather conditions became appreciably more favourable.

We looked at the barometer. Good heavens! Was it possible? In the last four hours it had fallen nearly a tenth.

At that moment there came a whistle down the voice-pipe beside my bunk.

'Well, what is it?'

'Waterspout to starboard, captain; come up at once,' shouted some one from the bridge. Scarcely had we reached the deck, when the portent swept past us, a great black column of water some five yards in diameter, narrowing in the middle, and spreading wider as it mounted into the clouds above.

The amazing thing was the speed at which, in spite of the dead calm, it swept along the surface of the water. Its force was evidenced by the whirlpool at its base, which left behind it a seething wake of foam.

It was well that it did not happen to take our little vessel in its track, for it would certainly have left us some unpleasing mementoes of its visit.

CHAPTER XII

RIGHT THROUGH THE BLOCKADE

By next morning the barometer had fallen another tenth. Dirty-gray storm-clouds were slowly moving up from the west. From time to time faint cat's-paws appeared upon the water, now from the north, now from the west, and again from a south-westerly direction. That was very satisfactory, for it meant beyond all doubt, an early change of weather. The second-officer searched the horizon keenly with his glasses, and then muttered something to himself.

'I'm betting on a north-wester,' said I, 'with rain, and perhaps also fog. Can't you smell anything?'

The mate sniffed suspiciously. 'I don't think I'll take you,' said he. 'I was just going to say myself that I felt as if——'

'We shan't quarrel over that, then! I believe I can smell the fog coming. Wait and see.'

The eight o'clock observation gave us one degree of west longitude. We had therefore, though lying to with engines stopped, been carried westward by the set of the current, to the extent of a whole degree of longitude. The latitude had only altered by a few minutes, southward, as we had found a few hours before.

A dark shadow, which was now observable on the water, to the south, made us reach hastily for our glasses.

Wind. South wind. It was coming now—just what we had been praying for. A few minutes more and it would have reached us. While the water slowly began to crisp under the breeze, the horizon line began to waver; the clear, sharply-defined line which marked the division between sea and sky seemed in places raised and undulating—the first presage of coming fog. Towards ten o'clock the wind jumped round to the south-west, and freshened. Light wisps of vapour began to drift down on our port bow, and sometimes from right ahead. Half an hour later the horizon was so dim that it was impossible to take an altitude.

'What about it?' asked Düsselmann, who was taking the watch, giving me, as he spoke, a keen, sidelong glance, his right hand already on the lever of the engine-room telegraph.

I thought a moment, then: 'Carry on,' I said. 'Half speed! Course, south-west!'

The telegraph rang. In engine-room and stokehold things got lively. Heavily and slowly the screw began to revolve, there was a churning and frothing at the stern, and the *Aud* got slowly under way. Once more in the charthouse there was a frenzy of calculating and measuring; with the result that we decided to proceed as far as a certain point at reduced speed, so that it would still be open to us, if necessary, to choose the northern route. But if, by the time we

reached that point, the misty weather continued, then during the night we would try for the break-through.

By midday we estimated the strength of the wind as 3.[1] From time to time there were light showers of fine rain. Pity that we were still a day's steaming from the danger-line, otherwise we might well have got through that night, for the moon was completely obscured by clouds. The barometer fell slowly but steadily. For the present it was still too high to mean an immediate storm, but if it continued to fall at the same rate we might have more than we bargained for later on. For the present we were well content. We were now nearing the point which must mark for us the parting of the ways, and I decided for the southern route—through the blockade.

The look-outs were now doubled. Even the cook had to 'stand his watch,' and was greatly delighted at being allowed on the bridge, close to the exalted beings who performed the mysteries of navigation.

Now, more than ever, the motto for every one was: 'Keep your eyes skinned!' Ahead of us were the enemy outposts in imposing numbers, and on our starboard bow, on the east coast of Iceland, enemy auxiliary cruisers had also been reported.

Next day was the 16th of April. At 4 a.m. there was entered in the log-book under the heading 'Weather' the following remark: 'Overcast, increasingly misty, occasional heavy showers, wind, south-west 4[2], freshening, corresponding sea.'

[1] Light to moderate breeze. [2] Force 4, *i.e.* moderate breeze.

We reckoned out the course and the distance. It was still 150 nautical miles to the line on which the enemy cruisers were patrolling. If we aimed straight for the middle of this line, we should, at an average speed of ten knots, arrive at that point at about 8 p.m.

That was good luck for us, for 8 p.m. is, on all ships, the hour for a change of watch, and at such times the men's attention is bound to be a little distracted. Moreover, the day was a Sunday. And on Sunday, in English ships, every one would certainly do himself a little extra well, with the aid of whisky and similar good things. Up here, too, that was especially to be expected. For the men on a remote outpost station like this, who were doubtless not relieved too frequently, in their monotonous but trying duty, that was almost the only pleasure which they had a chance to enjoy. Moreover, in view of the overcast weather, it was pretty certain that by eight o'clock it would be already growing dark. By dawn we could be sixty miles beyond the enemy line, and of course far out of sight.

'Full speed ahead!' Now for it!

The farther west we steamed, the more the wind and sea increased in strength. Spray began to dash over the bows, and soon forced us to seek the protection of our oilskins. The afternoon brought a very pleasant surprise, for the rain quite slowly and imperceptibly transformed itself into a real undeniable fog, which grew thicker and thicker. By 4 p.m. one could scarcely see half a mile. Our chances were

improving from minute to minute. Were we really to have such luck? It was scarcely believable.

We steamed south-west at full speed. Any one seeing us would have thought that we must have come out of the Polar Sea. Even in peace time that would have been unusual; how much more so now in time of war.

What would happen, then, if an Englishman suddenly jumped out of the fog upon us? We could scarcely expect him to believe that we were nothing but a harmless collier!

By six o'clock the visibility was down to three or four ship's lengths at most. The whole ship's company was on the look-out. No one thought of sleep; excitement kept us all alert. Gray and heavy lay the fog upon the water. Nothing was to be seen or heard. The uncanny stillness pressed like an incubus upon our excited nerves. Our binoculars were hardly ever away from our eyes. Every other moment we thought we heard or saw something abnormal. Meanwhile, the *Aud* was thrashing more and more heavily through the rising sea. Big white caps broke against her bow, the spray was thrown up over bridge and funnel. Every moment, as the ship drove onward towards the enemy's line, the tension grew. We scarcely dared to breathe.

'Time, please?'

'Seven-ten, captain,' came the whispered reply.

'Sharp look-out ahead. We're close on the line.'

It was odd to see how every man, as though to see

farther, craned his neck forward, as he sought to pierce the thick veil ahead.

The minute-hand marked 7.15. The minutes were passing much too slowly for us.

But what was that? 'Hard a-port!' 'Increase speed to the utmost!' 'Emergency stations!'

The wheel flew over to port with a jerk, the wires of the engine-room telegraph underneath the deck-planks creaked as though they would break. As a startled sea-bird sheers away, so the *Aud* shoots in a sudden curve to port, while to starboard, not two cables' lengths off, a dark, black-gray mass looms ghostly out of the fog.

Damnation! An auxiliary cruiser! Her silhouette became clearer—two masts, high upper works, a thick funnel.

'Half speed!' 'Course, south-by-west!' There is no possibility of escape by flight. We are discovered, for the English ship, which I estimated roughly as of 10,000 tons, alters course at the same moment, and steams along parallel to us, scarcely 200 yards away. She must be going at reduced speed, for she keeps obstinately just abreast of us. The comedy is about to begin.

At the first alarm, the 'watch below'—who had all been keeping a look-out on deck—hurry away to their bunks, the suspicious objects are hidden; we on the bridge, with beating hearts but outwardly cool and collected, tramp up and down with our hands in our pockets, expectorating freely and smoking like chimneys. There is nothing to indicate that we are in the least

perturbed by the appearance of the cruiser. Dully, as if it was all a matter of course, we take an occasional glance ahead through our glasses, tooting every couple of minutes, like the simple merchantman we are, with our hoarse steam siren, in dutiful obedience to the rules laid down for warning-signals during fog. To the unwelcome stranger we scarcely give a glance. The crew of a tramp are apt to be indifferent. Thus, for an appreciable time, we steam quietly along, side by side, neither making any overtures to the other.

I am, of course, burning to know what the Englishman is up to. In order to make unobtrusive investigations—it is evident that all the available binoculars on the cruiser were being turned on us—I send my second-officer into the charthouse. The observations which he makes through the charthouse window he then communicates to me on the bridge through the voice-pipe. 'Several large guns forward—same aft,' is the tenor of his first report.

Gradually, over yonder on the cruiser, things begin to liven up. More and more men appear on deck, and stare hard at us.

'Our reckoning was right to a hair, any way,' opines the second-officer, with a sarcastic grin—small consolation in the present circumstances. We wait and wait for a signal from the Englishman, ordering us to stop, or a round of blank fired for the same purpose; but nothing of the kind happens.

Damn it all, is the fellow going to escort us in to the Faroes? It almost looks like it, for those rocky

islands must lie right ahead, though still a day's steaming from here.

Time goes on, and we still wait, bracing ourselves for what may come. When the chronometer shows 7.30 I order 'seven bells' to be loudly and clearly struck on the ship's bell. We had, for good and sufficient reasons, hitherto pointedly neglected this universal usage of board-ship life. The men standing watching us at the cruiser's rail gradually drift away again. A dirty little collier is, of course, no very interesting object. Moreover, it is cold and wet on deck, and at eight o'clock the watch will be changed. Perhaps, also, a tot of steaming grog is being served out below.

It began to grow dusk. In order to confirm the Britisher in his conviction of our innocent character, I gave orders to light the masthead light and side lights. The English and Norwegian signal books lay ready to our hand on the flag-locker. We had already looked up the signals that we were likely to want. But it was all for nothing. No activity was to be observed either in the neighbourhood of the guns or of the boats. Gradually even the bridge was left to the sole tenancy of the officers of the watch.

Was the Britisher keeping some big surprise up his sleeve, or did he really take us for what we pretended to be? That they could read clearly on our side. The course, however, on which they found us might surely have given them food for thought. Did they really not find anything curious in the idea that a ship of our type should be coming straight from the North Pole?

I must confess that the conduct of this English auxiliary cruiser—whose name, unfortunately, we could not make out, as it had been painted over, was one of the greatest puzzles of my life, and has remained so to this day.

Eight bells. Change of watch. On board the English ship also the new watch came on deck. She was now so close to us that every movement on her deck could be seen, although it was now growing perceptibly darker. Good God! If we had only had a torpedo or a submarine in attendance; a more favourable opportunity for a hit with a torpedo could hardly be imagined. Boof! the cruiser buries her nose deep in a sea and takes a considerable quantity of water over her bows, to come pouring in great streams out of her forward scuttles.

'I believe the fellow funks the weather,' said one of my men.

Well, that was always a possibility. With the sea then running—the wind had increased to force 5 or 6 [1]—the Britisher may not have fancied getting out a boat with a prize crew. Moreover, the day was Sunday. Perhaps his idea was to escort us till we fell in with the cruiser on the next station southward, and leave the job to her. However, if it came to taking a prize crew on board, we thought we knew how to deal with them.

In the end the Britisher began to get on my nerves. I considered whether it would be advisable to signal

[1] 'Strong breeze' on the Beaufort scale, which does not recognise the 'half-a-gale' of ordinary parlance.

to him with the Morse lamp, asking for our exact position.

Somehow or other I must find out what he wanted with us. By pretending that, owing to the fog, we had been unable to get our exact position for a long time, I might perhaps be able to break through his reserve.

Then, suddenly, we saw the Britisher increase his speed, shoot ahead of us for about three hundred yards, and then, putting her helm hard over, swing across our bows and take a SSE. course. Oho! thought we, now something's going to happen.

But the Britisher had no idea of coming to close quarters with us. Farther and farther he drew away from us in a southerly direction. Soon he had faded into the fog so completely that all we could see of him was a formless dark blur. We could hardly trust our eyes. But when shortly afterwards even the dark blur disappeared and nothing was to be seen but fog, and yet more fog, a joyful exclamation broke from us all. 'We're safely through!'

It was now a question of putting our best foot forward and making ourselves scarce. Once more the engine-room telegraph rang 'Full speed ahead!' the lights were once more extinguished, and at the best speed we could make, we steamed north-west.

'My belief is,' said Düsselmann, with a grin, 'the fellow was honestly sorry for us. I'll bet he said to himself, "Hope the old tub will make her next port safely anyhow!"'

It was a possible explanation. He had been guilty

of an unpardonable error; but no one had better reason to pardon him than we.

It was eight o'clock when he left us, after keeping us company for exactly an hour. What we had now to do was to get ourselves as quickly as possible out of the neighbourhood of the cruiser line. There was a possibility, too, of pursuit by fast destroyers, for our cruiser might later become aware of his stupidity. During the next hour, too, we had to reckon with a possible encounter with an auxiliary cruiser a little out of her course, for in fog it is no easy matter to keep station, with wind, sea, and current all playing tricks with one—as I knew only too well from my outpost service.

It was only three hours later, when nothing had happened in the meantime, that I ventured to steer a westerly course again.

We were now in the North Atlantic—a long stage nearer our goal.

Towards midnight it was blowing so hard that we had to lash down everything movable on deck to prevent the seas that came aboard us doing any damage. On both sides of the deck I had life-lines stretched to hold on to. The wind had meantime veered round to the west, and later on to north-west. The fog had disappeared. Showers of rain swept over us at constantly shorter intervals. The barometer was falling with notable rapidity. These were sure signs of the approach of a north-wester.

The little *Aud* thrashed her way more and more heavily through the confused sea, shaking off indignantly the masses of water which came swishing over

her bows. Her blunt bows and the unusual height of her upper-works offered too much resistance to the wind. It was no wonder that our speed fell gradually from ten knots to five, and afterwards to four. We scarcely seemed to be making any headway at all.

Not to lose way too much, I put her on a more southerly course, but only so much as would still keep me clear of the blockade line which was stationed westward of the Hebrides. Even in the thickest fog one was never quite safe from the English blood-hounds, and it was scarcely to be hoped that the next we met would be as stupid as the last.

Wind and sea were now from the north-west—nearly on our beam—and we rolled heavily. By midday the wind was already blowing with force 8.[1] We could easily have more of this than we wanted. I had confidence in the ship, which was staunch and seaworthy enough to ride out even a heavy storm; what worried me was the cargo. As has already been mentioned, this had not been as well stowed as under normal conditions the safety of the ship demanded. With seas breaking over us all the time there was no use thinking of re-stowing it; the holds would have been filled with water the moment the hatch-ways were uncovered. If the ship began to labour yet more heavily there would be nothing for it but to lie to and wait for calmer weather.

The seas grew bigger and bigger, one squall followed hard on the heels of another. The glass fell steadily. All the signs pointed to a regular hurricane.

[1] 'Gale force.'

I had had no astronomical observation for the last two days, and meanwhile the wind, the run of the seas, and the current (the last very uncertain in the neighbourhood of Iceland), had doubtless carried us some way out of course. How much, it was impossible to estimate with any accuracy.

On the other hand, it was of the first importance that I should make an accurate land-fall, as I could not risk having to feel my way along the Irish coast, and to that end it was very desirable to get an exact position during the next day or two. It was highly probable, however, that the weather would not permit of an observation. I therefore decided to lay a course for the Rockalls, from which we were now about a day's steaming.

These Rockalls are a veritable wonder of nature. Far out in the Atlantic, more than two hundred nautical miles west of the Scottish coast, there lies a far-stretching reef, a sandbank with innumerable little points of rock sticking up through it. The bank has a diameter of about three nautical miles, and runs roughly east and west. At its western end there rises out of the water a single rock, neither higher nor wider than an ordinary two-story house. This rock is the only visible portion of the reef, all the other ridges are covered, though many of them are only just below the surface of the water. Where the bank ends, the floor of the Atlantic goes suddenly down to a depth of several thousand yards. Even on the big English charts the Rockalls are only marked with a point about as big as the head of a pin. The sailing-

directions mention that in the course of a year dozens of ships are wrecked upon these rocks and perish with all hands. It is a veritable ocean graveyard. The soundings which the charts give on the banks are few, and, as all the books state, very uncertain, because no one has taken the trouble to survey this inhospitable island. The thing to do is to avoid it. I knew, therefore, that I was taking a considerable risk in making for it, even though I should approach it from the west, and with the greatest caution.

It would suffice, however, if I sighted it from a distance; that would give me a sufficiently exact position. So I hardened my heart and laid my course for the western extremity of the bank.

By now the storm was howling like hell let loose, the squalls slung volleys of hailstones down on us. The seas raged against our little ship, which still shouldered them from her gallantly. Darkness at length descended upon the furious raging of the elements.

'Wind-force 10 to 11,'[1] reads the entry in the log, made by the officer of the watch at 8 p.m. 'Force 12' is the maximum. The scale provides for nothing beyond that.

The constant showers of rain and hail added to the blackness of the night. It was almost impossible to see at all. Suddenly, through a rift in the clouds, the moon shone out. And just in time.

Ahead, about four points on the starboard bow, a dark shadow was visible. No need to guess what it

[1] 'Storm force'; 12 topping the scale with 'Hurricane.'

was, for already we could see, though vaguely, a long, lean hull with several promenade decks, two high, thin funnels, and two masts. Passenger liner or auxiliary cruiser? It was too dark to tell. All we could see—and we noted it with some satisfaction —was that, for all her 12,000 tons, she was making just as heavy weather of it as we were.

In spite of the breaking seas that swept over the after part of the ship, I reduced speed immediately. It was the only possible chance. As luck would have it, a sudden hail-shower hid us for the moment. The steamer carried no lights, and was going slow. Probably, therefore, an auxiliary cruiser on patrol.

A quarter of an hour of anxious waiting followed. Suddenly the liner seemed to wake up. Inexplicably, she increased speed and steamed away. By that time the distance between us had decreased to half a mile. If every one on board, including the officers of the watch, had not been asleep, they must have seen us.

The British boasted of the watchfulness of their fleet; I cannot help thinking that at the time of our break-through it must have been hibernating.

CHAPTER XIII

OFF THE ROCKALLS IN A HURRICANE

During the night the storm increased in violence. A sea which struck us broadside on laid the *Aud* on her beam-ends, flung every one on deck into the lee scuppers, and swept away everything movable.

Caution suggested lying to. But the date of my rendezvous now gave me only one day's margin, and the storm might last for days. There was nothing for it but to go ahead, and chance the cargo shifting —though the picture of those heavy cases in the half-empty hold breaking adrift and taking charge, was one that did not bear thinking about.

To reduce the violence of the continual battering on the vessel's sides, I gave orders to distribute oil upon the water, at the same time turning a couple of points south. This had the effect of reducing the roll and making the combers break before they reached the stern.

It was some relief when day at last dawned. At least we could see a short distance ahead, and that was our main need, for we were now heading straight for the Rockalls.

Of the one rock which ordinarily rose above the water, hardly anything was likely to be visible in

such a sea, and we could only hope to recognise it by the surf, the columns of water shooting up into the air, and the clouds of seagulls which probably circled about it.

The weather grew wilder and wilder. Rain and hail showers swept at shorter and shorter intervals over mountainous seas, and made it difficult to see at all.

In order to leave nothing to chance, since eight o'clock in the morning I had had men heaving the lead, so that we might know the moment we reached the outer edge of the bank.

By dead-reckoning—there had been no possibility of taking an observation for three days past—we ought to sight the rock, bearing east, about two miles away, at about 1 p.m. Allowance had, of course, been made for drift and leeway.

10 a.m.: Nothing to be seen.

Eleven o'clock! Always the same picture. Nothing but wild, raging sea. But it almost looked as if the troughs of the waves were deeper, the breakers fiercer, like the seas over a shallow bottom. Were we already? . . . No one dared to say it; only the constant use of the binoculars showed that every one shared the same thought. But neither rock, nor surf, nor birds were to be seen.

Twelve o'clock was already past. Soon, we *must* be there. 'No bottom!' comes, with monotonous iteration, the shouted report from aft, where, under the direction of the first-officer, the sounding machine is in constant use. More than once the men were

caught by a sea and flung against the rail. I shouted to them to hang on, and gave the order for more oil to be poured from the bow. All orders had to be given, or rather yelled, through the megaphone. The wind seemed to bite off the words as they came out of one's mouth.

Then, just in the midst of a fierce squall came a wild shout from aft, 'Bottom! sixty-three fathoms.'

'Reduce speed!' 'Sharp look-out!'

Every one knew what was now at stake. Fifty fathoms! — fifty-six — sixty-two — seventy — twenty-eight.' Damnation! what is one to make of such a series? In the special chart, which lay under a glass cover on the bridge, depths of seventy, sixty, fifty fathoms were marked promiscuously, with the comforting annotation that they were unreliable.

Alter course? But, which way? It was too late now to lie to, unless I wanted to risk being driven slowly but with inexorable certainty on the reefs.

Every course was as good, or bad, as every other, until we had once sighted the rock. The visibility was now from 800 to 1000 yards, and at need that might serve.

After a momentary hesitation I pulled myself together and determined to hold on.

'Breakers to starboard!' came a shout from the lower bridge, where some of the men were keeping a look-out.

'Hard a-port! Hard over!' Slowly and sluggishly the ship answered to her helm. The seconds grew to minutes. Shielding our faces against wind and water with our hands, we tried to discover where the breakers lay. But all that could be seen was one continuous welter of foam. The waves all round us, high as the side of a house, were breaking with a roar of thunder and shooting their spray high into the air. It was impossible to tell whether it was surf breaking on a reef, or only breaking seas.

Through this hell's brew the little *Aud* held gallantly on. We were now on an easterly course, and the seas, taking us on the port quarter, swept furiously over the after part of the ship. I tried the effect of increasing speed. It was no use. The only result was that the stern created so much suction that the seas poured over it more violently than before.

One moment we would think we heard breakers to port, the next to starboard, but always it proved to be an illusion. It was the same with the sunken reefs and sandbanks, which we imagined we saw from time to time; they were only dark patches and eddies in the water, due to the plunge of the breaking seas. All this, however, we could see only as if through a veil, for the storm-scourged masses of rain and spindrift blurred the whole surface of the sea.

Again and again, when the seas came charging down and leapt upon her, the little *Aud* lay over so far to starboard that we thought she would never get up

again; and when, on the return roll, she met an oncoming sea, the port end of the bridge was often under water. Suddenly, some two hundred yards to starboard, two birds appeared, low down over the sea. Did that mean rocks?

'Port the helm!' . . . 'What in the name of Heaven's wrong now?'

'The compass!' shouts the quartermaster, hanging on to the spokes with a desperate grip, to keep the helm hard over. God in heaven! Is everything at once in league against us? In sober fact the compass seemed to have suddenly gone mad. The compass-card spun round like a teetotum, whirling faster and faster. It was only by the direction of the seas that we could tell that the ship's head was now slowly coming round to port. And the run of the seas was for the moment all we had to steer by, for the compass was utterly useless. It pointed one moment North, the next South-West, and absolutely refused to steady.

Meanwhile, from time to time the shouts of the leadsmen aft reached one's ear, but they were almost unintelligible. In the end they made shift to give us the soundings by signing with their fingers. But the depths were too uncertain to give us any help.

Now, however, more and more birds showed up to starboard—fifty, a hundred, whole flocks appeared and whirled wildly, with frightened screechings, through the air. There could no longer be any doubt. Yonder, a couple of cables southward,

lay the rocks. We were on the very brink of destruction.

'Hard a-port! Quick, man, quick!' I shot the words out with all my strength and pointed to port with my hand, but no one understood a word. The hurricane was at its worst and the wind whistled and howled so that it was impossible to hear an order.

Fortunately, however, Mathiesen, good seaman that he was, had already put the helm over without waiting to be told. It was our only chance of clearing the reefs.

And now came the most anxious and perilous moments of the whole voyage. It seemed as though we had plunged into a seething, raging whirlpool, from which there could be no escape. The engines were now running at full speed. We had the seas right abeam, and they did what they liked with us, but that was the only course that offered the slightest chance of getting clear.

When I look back, it seems to me incomprehensible that we came out of that witches' cauldron almost unscathed. At the time, I would not have given five minutes' purchase for our lives. I let no hint appear in my bearing of how grave I thought the danger, but I could read on every face the same conviction of our imminent deadly peril.

As though we had not yet had enough of the nerve-racking game, there now swept down on us a fierce squall of hail. Veritable mountains of water reared themselves against us, seeming to overtop our masts.

Like monsters opening gaping jaws to leap the next moment upon their prey, they raged against our little vessel, hurled themselves on her decks, and threatened to engulf her. The *Aud* shuddered and trembled in every timber. At every new assault it seemed as if something must give way.

Only with the utmost effort was it still possible to heave the lead. The leadsmen, with life-lines round them, stood in their streaming oilskins on the after-deck; and though thrown this way and that by the seas, they refused to leave their post, though I had signed to them to come forward.

'Thirty-three fathoms!' Then, at brief intervals, 'Twenty-eight fathoms! — twenty-three — eighteen— fifteen—twelve—eight.' *Br-r-umm!* A violent shock ran suddenly through the whole ship—masts, derricks, funnel, ventilators, deck-houses; in fact, the whole hull seemed to shake and quiver for several seconds.

Aground! That was my first thought. We looked at each other in dismay. The *Aud* seemed rooted to the spot. She scarcely even rolled, though one sea after another raced down upon her.

'No water making in the engine-room,' reported the chief engineer, who had rushed, panting, up the ladder. He, too, then, had the impression that we were aground. We put the helm over first to port and then to starboard. In vain. The ship showed not the slightest inclination to move from the spot. Suddenly I happened to glance aft, and saw in a moment the cause of the phenomenon.

A huge sea had 'come aboard green,' and sweeping pitilessly over the after part of the ship, had poured down on to the well-deck, flooding it to the bulwark-rail. The scuttles had jammed, the scuppers seemed also to be stopped up. The mass of water could find no vent, and its sheer weight had caused the inexplicable immobility of the ship.

The reason we had not seen it coming was that we had all been gazing over the starboard bow, where we knew the reef must lie. The wonder was that no one had been swept overboard.

It was several minutes before the ship would answer her helm again. But when she did, our spirits rose with a bound; for now, if we could only hold on upon a north-easterly course for a short time longer, we should be clear of the reefs for good and all. Fortunately, we had still several hours of daylight before us.

For two hours longer the *Aud* had to battle with the full fury of the storm. Again and again it seemed as if she must be overwhelmed. And always at the back of our minds there was the nightmare dread of the cargo shifting. Then, at last, the violence of the wind began to abate a little, and at the end of another hour the sea, too, had perceptibly moderated. The worst was over.

Also, we were in all probability clear of the danger zone, so that I could ease her by steaming at slow speed upon an easterly course. The compass, too, returned to its senses. Whether its vagaries were due to vibration set up by the shock of the seas, or

to the influence of the magnetic iron in the reef—which is noted in the sailing-directions—we never knew.

By 5.30 that afternoon the lead had ceased to find bottom. We had cleared the eastern edge of the bank. I laid a course, for the present SSE. in order gradually to approach the steamer track on which, in my assumed character, it would be appropriate for me to be found.

CHAPTER XIV

AN OLD ACQUAINTANCE

TOWARDS evening the wind jumped round to NNW., and fell considerably. In the course of the night we sighted two more English ships of the auxiliary cruiser type, but neither of them took the slightest notice of us. Our luck in this respect began to seem a little uncanny. Could there be something behind it? Did the English know about our coming? In that case caution was doubly necessary, for if our plans had been betrayed, there would be no lack of patrolling craft on the Irish coast.

My orders tied me to a definite time of arrival. This was two days off. To arrive an hour too soon or too late might spoil everything, for no one would be expecting me. We measured off distances on the chart. There could be no doubt about it that if we continued steaming at our present pace we should make Tralee a day too soon—an eventuality which had appeared so improbable that none of those who planned our voyage had taken it into account.

With the intention of running in on the evening of the next day, as this would be the most favourable time for us, I steered south-east at reduced speed, intending to approach the steamer track. So far, of

course, I had avoided it. While I was sketching out the plan of action for the next day, there came a knock at the door. 'Well, Battermann,' I said to the signalman, who entered, 'what is it? Surely not another of them?

'Just what it is, captain. Another of these Englishmen. Three miles away on our starboard beam. We saw him just coming out of a squall.'

As I came on deck a long black steamer with narrow funnels was steaming down on us at full speed. The first-officer had meanwhile given the order for emergency stations, and was steaming, with the usual reduced speed, on an easterly course. We might thus be supposed to be coming from America.

'The "conjurer's box" is watertight,' came the report from below, and the usual 'bag of tricks' was hurriedly passed down. It was high time, for the Englishman was approaching us with alarming rapidity. He looked as if he meant to bite us, damn him!

'Down, Hector! Down, sir!' The dog was barking furiously on the forecastle head. They must have heard him clearly on the English ship, for we, on our part, could hear the ringing of their engine-room telegraph.

She stopped her engines scarcely five hundred yards away. Now for the prize crew, thought I. But as I had no desire for a closer acquaintance, I kept the *Aud* waddling quietly along at a 'speed'—if you can call it so—of five knots. We carried on meanwhile as if the English ship was not there.

She was an old Oriental liner of some 6000 tons

burden, and somehow I could not help thinking that I had seen her before. Suddenly I remembered. Of course, it was on that very promenade deck that I had spent a pleasant hour or two at a reception held on board her, in Fremantle, West Australia. What a contrast the deck presented then and now! Instead of the fair faces and gay summer frocks, which then made so pleasing a picture, some dozens of English bluejackets were crowded at the rail, watching us curiously, and where the comfortable liner deck-chairs had stood, a couple of grim-looking three-inch guns were turning their ugly muzzles on us.

Whether she perhaps expected us to wish her a polite good-morning, I do not know, but any way, instead of her old tattered scrap of bunting, she suddenly ran up a brand-new ensign. No doubt she wanted to impress us. However, we Norwegians were far too phlegmatic to worry ourselves about little things like that. And so everything remained just as it was before. No boat was lowered; no prize crew came on board.

And yet the auxiliary cruiser did appear to be taking an unwelcome interest in us. She came closer, took a good look at our starboard side, and crossed our stern once or twice. Then she lay to port of us with her engines stopped, but without making any signal. The gun crews meanwhile had disappeared.

It looked as though they intended to respect our 'neutrality,' and no wonder if it was a question of looks. As I kept quietly steaming ahead, the distance between us gradually increased. On the English ship

all eyes were fixed on us as though we had been some kind of strange animal. Then we heard her engine-room telegraph bell, and a second time she came speeding towards us. This time she came up close on our port side and . . . shot past and went foaming off to the eastward.

'That puts the lid on it,' muttered Düsselmann. 'Captain, let's make all speed for Tralee, and steam right in with colours flying. If they don't have a triumphal archway ready to welcome us, they're not the men I take them for.'

Certainly, anything seemed to be possible to these English.

If only, I thought to myself, there isn't something behind it. The business began to look queer.

Why did the English never ask us, as they were in duty bound to do, where we were from and where we were bound for? Why did they snuff round us on all sides as one dog does to another? Did they want to lull us into a false security? And yet, so far as I could see, a betrayal of our enterprise was absolutely out of the question.[1] I believed then, and have since confirmed my impression that they let us pass in all innocence. And that was a brilliant feat even for Englishmen.

[1] So far as an actual betrayal is concerned, the author is probably right; but it appears from the evidence published in the *Times* of the 25th of May, 1918, that some of Count Bernstorff's messages dealing with the preparations for this expedition had been intercepted.

CHAPTER XV

PLANS AND DREAMS

As the barometer had come down with a run two days before, so now it went up with a run, till it stood in the neighbourhood of the two words that every seaman reads with satisfaction, 'Set Fair.'

The sun shone brilliantly, a light north-westerly breeze played on the water. The touch of spring, the contrast with our late experiences, brought us all into the highest spirits.

To-morrow the die would be cast, our fate decided. Why should we not be gay?

I held a council with my officers to discuss the plans for the next day. We decided to alter our appearance during the night, by carrying from the charthouse to the engine-room skylight a funnel-casing six feet high, made out of wood and canvas, and painted the same colour as the deck-houses. If any photographs had been taken of us, it would then not be easy to recognise us by them. I intended also, the next morning, to paint out the flags and the name on our side with black paint, and have the funnel and ventilators painted yellow. I had decided to proceed in under the Spanish flag. An appropriate funnel marking was looked up. Supposing that we had really been

betrayed, or had been reported by an auxiliary cruiser, that would at least delay discovery.

If we got through unmolested, and the Irish were at the rendezvous punctually, the landing of arms *must* succeed. At this point we badly felt the want of of W.T. apparatus. How useful it would have been if we could have got into communication with Tralee and asked 'if the coast was clear.' [1]

I had been concerned to read in the *Berliner Zeitung* just before leaving, that there had been violent disorders in Dublin, and that martial law had been proclaimed both over the city and the whole of the east coast.

Was that mere folly on the part of the Irish, or was it an astute move, designed to divert the attention of the English Government from the west coast? I had, unfortunately, had no chance to ask Casement about that. A remark I had once heard him let fall, now made me uneasy. What if the Irish had struck their blow prematurely and now the west coast too had been placed under martial law? That might quite possibly knock the bottom out of our plans.

We should have to wait and see how things developed. For the present my one concern was to carry out my orders—to be at the right place at the right time. As the plan had originated with the Irish, it seemed to me unthinkable that they should not have made all preparations for my reception. Since they would

[1] One cannot help wondering whether Lieutenant Spindler thinks that an unknown call-sign on the Irish coast would have attracted no attention from the English authorities.

time the rendezvous by the English reckoning, I had the chronometer set to Greenwich mean time.

My plan for the next day was complete, and I could now turn to the further questions, how should I get away again, and what should I do afterwards? I had, at various times, given a good deal of thought to this part of the enterprise, and had a complete plan ready. It was open to me, of course, either to make for a neutral port, or to attempt to return to Germany; but the plan I had determined on was something of a more ambitious character than either of these. It was nothing more nor less than to embark on the career of a commerce raider.

My sole real armament consisted of a single machine-gun, which I had obtained permission to retain out of my cargo; but the reader must not begin to laugh too soon.

The whole plan was a gigantic bluff, but I had succeeded in convincing my at first incredulous chiefs of its feasibility. I intended, of course, to avoid the larger, faster, and in many cases armed vessels, and confine my attentions to the smaller fry, from, say, 3000 tons downwards.

I intended to mount four dummy 10.5 cm. guns, and I had procured before starting a supply of maroons. My plan was, when I fell in with a suitable quarry, to summon her to stop, training one of the dummy guns on her. If she hesitated I would fire a maroon, and it was ten to one that the absence of a splash would not be noticed. If she was still recalcitrant, the whistle of machine-gun bullets over her bridge would show

that we were in earnest. In nine cases out of ten I believe that the bluff would have come off.

We had every facility on board, in the way of planking, paint, and canvas, for altering our appearance, say, from a well-decked to a flush-decked vessel, and we had an extensive outfit of national flags of all descriptions. There was no reason why we should not emulate, on a smaller scale, the exploits of the famous *Möwe*.

I determined now, on the eve of our Irish adventure, to take my men into my confidence regarding this further enterprise, and they responded with an enthusiasm which left nothing to be desired.

The day was not to pass without its moment of excitement. About 6 p.m. the look-out suddenly reported 'Submarine! Four points on the port bow.'

'Full speed ahead!' 'Zigzag course! Look out for the wake of the torpedo!'

We on the bridge had meanwhile sighted the dark object, moving about a foot above the water. English? or German? That was the question. To make certain I steered closer to it—1500, 1000, 800 yards. The next half minute must decide; and it decided! The supposed periscope was an empty preserved meat-tin, wandering at large over the waves.

The joke was hardly as funny to the look-out as to the rest of us; but, after all, it was better to see too much than too little, for we were close now to the steamer track, and not very far ahead lay the Irish coast.

CHAPTER XVI

WE REACH OUR GOAL

It was Thursday, the 20th of April. A fresh, glorious morning. During the night the wind had died away. The air was still, and the broad, even undulations of a north-westerly swell made the only movement on the water.

During the night the false casing round the funnel had been completed.

In order to have everything ready for the landing when we reached Tralee Bay, the camouflage cargo had, of course, to be removed from above the munitions. This proved to be no light task, for the pit-props were rather green and consequently heavy, which delayed the unloading a good deal.

All hands had to turn to and open hatches, and throw the whole of the false cargo overboard. In half an hour's time the upper deck looked like a packing department at one of the big stores. Window-frames, door-frames, tin-ware, zinc buckets, tin baths, and the like were sent up in a steady stream from the hold and piled upon the deck. Boxes and straw went into the furnaces, the rest was heaved overboard. Before long our course was marked by a trail of flotsam and jetsam that stretched to the horizon.

With a vague instinct that it might come in useful, I retained on board a small quantity of the pit props —a precaution which was well repaid on the following day.

While we were at this work an armed motor-ship passed us within six miles, and gave us some anxious moments; but fortunately took no notice of us.

The noon observation made our position 52° N. 11° W.—a bare forty-five miles from Tralee. In about four hours we should have reached our goal.

I had, unfortunately, to give up my plan of proceeding in under the Spanish flag, for it had taken us longer than we calculated to jettison the cargo, and there was not time enough to make the metamorphosis.

What troubled me most was that it would be full-moon that night, and the bright moonlight might easily prove our undoing.

The noon eight-bells had just been struck when the engine-room telegraph rang for 'full speed ahead,' and the *Aud* pointed her nose for Tralee Bay.

The next two hours were occupied with the final preparations for the landing. There was still a mass of things to get done. Steam-winches and unloading tackle were made ready, the hatches uncovered, and in every hold the top cases were placed in the slings ready for immediate landing. I had a supply of pocket electric-lamps and tools for opening the cases put in small bags, so that they could be passed ashore at once, for, from the moment we got alongside, the

unloading must go with a rush, in order to be finished before the English got wind of it.

If all went without a hitch, I hoped to have the ship emptied in seven to eight hours. If—that was the crux. It was, of course, quite possible that it might come to bloody hand-to-hand fighting before all was done.

There could be no doubt that the harbour authorities and perhaps also the military authorities, would come on board, as soon as we got in, to examine the ship and her papers. Their questions as to where we came from, and so forth, must be answered in such a way that they should have no desire to ask any more—that is to say, they must be rendered harmless; in case the Irish had not already provided for that.

It was clear that, even with the greatest caution, something might leak out about our sudden arrival, and suspicious nocturnal operations. Casement himself had told me that even in Tralee there were a good many people of English sympathies.

The town of Tralee lies about three miles from the harbour pier. The harbour proper, which is in a kind of outlying suburb, is called Fenit. Fenit is a small, insignificant harbour, which is connected with Tralee by a railway. This railway might be very awkward for us, for if an alarm was given in Fenit we should have to reckon on the arrival of the military within half an hour. For our main protection against them we should have to trust to the machine-guns which formed a portion of our cargo, packed in cases, ready for use. These must therefore be landed first of all.

The men to serve the machine-guns ought to be standing ready on the quay. I made sure once more that the explosives and incendiary bombs were ready, and the German naval ensign was at hand. To make assurance doubly sure, I had two additional masses of explosive placed in the forward part of the ship, so that, if need be, nothing of my ship should be left.

I then ordered, 'Hands wash and clean into No. 2's,' that is, to clean up, and put on uniform. Only our caps, which for the moment we could not put on, we hid where we could get at them easily. Over our uniform we pulled on our old Norwegian kit. Each man wore a dirk and pistol in his belt under his jacket.

Shortly after one o'clock the first signs of land appeared; long, low-lying, bluish cloud-banks on the horizon, which little by little assumed a definite form —the Irish coast!

There was not a ship in sight. I called up my men and gave them the last explanations. Hitherto they had known nothing definite, though, of course, they had long guessed that they were *not* bound for Libau. It was good to see their grim but well-pleased smiles when I told them that now it was up to us to make good, and every man must do his best.

I told them that even their uniforms might not save them from being shot if caught. They grinned knowingly, as much as to say, they've got to catch us first!

Splendid fellows! I knew that I could trust them. I explained my plans to the last detail. Every man

had his allotted task. The engineers, for instance, were told that they must be ready to pump out the water-tanks to lighten the ship and enable her to get up the shallow channel leading to Fenit.

As the last touch, the surgical dressings were served out, and the big medicine chest, with all necessary materials, was placed in the mess-room, and then I gave the order, 'Every man to his post.'

CHAPTER XVII

TWENTY-FOUR HOURS IN TRALEE BAY

THE coast lay before us in brilliant sunshine. High, bare mountains, seamed with clefts and gullies, with steep, overhanging cliffs, which assuredly have never been trodden by the foot of man. Only at the base of the cliffs, to a height of perhaps 150 yards above the water, we saw a few green patches of grass and low shrubs. What struck us particularly was the jagged, deeply indented ridges of the long ranges of mountains. Gradually the numerous islands and rocks that lay off the shore came into view. It was no very inviting picture. There are, in fact, few coasts more inhospitable and more dangerous from their numerous reefs than the Irish.

We sought persistently with our glasses for any sign of life; any house or lighthouse upon the coast. In vain. There was nothing to be seen but naked rocks. Here and there the coastline was a little withdrawn, so that we thought more than once 'this must be Tralee bay.' But there appeared on either side of it so many other similar openings between the high cliffs that we became confused. That was a decidedly unpleasant surprise.

Relying on my excellent noon observation, which

could not be much out, I held on for some way farther. 'Steep shore, deep water,' is a pretty sound rule, so we could safely stand close in. With the chart and the sailing directions open before us, we searched for the entrance. In a quarter of an hour we had found it; having picked up the 'Three Sisters,' a small, three-pointed rock on the south side of the twelve-mile broad estuary of the Shannon. The coast here bends sharply, first to the north-east, then to the east, and then in a wide curve, back to the north-west again. The result is that, in approaching from the sea, one at first sees only a long stretch of coastline, while the bay lies concealed behind it.

I immediately altered course to pass close to the 'Three Sisters,' and from there get my bearings for negotiating the entrance. There is a signal station at Loop Head, on a small island on the north side of the estuary, and I wanted to give it as wide a berth as possible. During the war, this innocent little island might well have developed into a grim monster bristling with guns. Certainly the signal station would be under military control.

Just as we were getting a four-point bearing [1] of

[1] As this phrase is not self-explanatory—like cross-bearings from *two* points ashore—some readers may like to be reminded of the elementary geometry involved in the method here referred to of determining a position by the aid of a single known point. Having got his four-point (45°) bearing, he would proceed on the same course till he got an eight-point (90°) bearing. In a right-angled triangle, of which one of the other angles is 45°, the remaining angle is also 45°. The sides opposite these equal angles are also equal. That is to say, the distance from the rock (which is what he wants to know) is equal to the distance run between the times of taking the two bearings (which he can determine by log-speed and allowances for current, etc.).

the 'Three Sisters,' there appeared over the water on our port bow a small triangular patch of gleaming white, that looked for all the world like a distant sail. Surely it must be the pilot cutter already on the look-out for us? I could have shouted for joy. A few minutes later, however, I made the unwelcome discovery that the supposed sail was assuming improbable dimensions, and it finally revealed itself as the actual island of Loop Head, which I had supposed to be farther north. The sun had played a trick on us, illuminating the western trapeze-shaped end of the island so brightly that it looked in the distance like a large white sail. Disappointment number one.

As soon as I recognised my mistake I altered course to starboard, from which direction there was, for the present, no danger to be apprehended, at least so far as we could see, for only naked rocks frowned down on us. Slowly we worked our way into the bay, anxiously scanning with our glasses every hill, cliff, and gully, but especially the surface of the water ahead. The current, which set strongly southward, tended to force us inshore, and necessitated constant small alterations of course. By 3.30 p.m. we had the 'Three Sisters' two miles on our starboard beam. Loop Head was now clearly visible. Except for the signal station and a few small buildings, nothing else was to be seen upon the island.

But—what was that to starboard? On a broad-topped cliff, some two hundred feet above the water, stood a high signal mast with wireless aerials. To right and left of it peered out half a dozen black

muzzles from embrasures hewn in the edge of the rock. The nastiest jar of all was that these guns were bearing right on us, and that a number of English soldiers were getting busy about them, while others were observing us through glasses.

Damnation! I had not been reckoning on quite such a reception as this. I at once sent below all the men whose presence was not required on deck, and the oft-played comedy began once more.

Under the observation of the English field-glasses, which were now being directed on us at short range, it was highly important to appear as unconcerned as possible. Scarcely honouring the English with a glance, we tramped solemnly up and down the bridge, in the usual manner, six paces to starboard, and then, stolidly, six paces to port again—all the while pulling at our pipes and spitting to the wide in the most approved fashion. Meanwhile we steered slightly to the north, in order to get away as soon as possible from the neighbourhood of the coast-defence station.

When a quarter of an hour had elapsed, and the latter had done nothing to make itself objectionable in the way of shot or signal, we concluded that the danger was over for the moment. Only for the moment, of course. To-day it was likely to be a case of 'out of the frying-pan into the fire.'

Meanwhile, ahead of us, a little group of islands was gradually rising out of the water, while on the southern and eastern sides of the bay a number of wretched-looking fishermen's huts came into view—outlying houses of Fenit.

The nearest and largest of the islands was Inishtooskert, our rendezvous with Sir Roger Casement.

The die must soon be cast. With a keener anxiety than we had yet known, we directed our glasses ahead. If everything continued to go as well as it had done hitherto, then, at the latest, within half an hour the pilot-boat must make her appearance, with the recognition marks that had been agreed upon—a green flag at the mast-head and a man with a green jersey in the bows.

On our starboard hand, almost on the sky-line of the hills, a light-coloured building became visible, looking like an ancient castle, with a long flagpole on the tower. Whether the pole was connected with a wireless installation, we could not tell. The castle was screened from the north side of the bay by a high wall of rock, which soon hid it from us again.

We were drawing nearer and nearer to our goal. Now only a mile—now half a mile—and we should be there. . . .

4.15 p.m. We were at the very spot—exactly a mile north-west of Inishtooskert, a long, low-lying island which was entirely uninhabited.

Now for it! With eager expectation we awaited the men who were to meet us here, and on whom it now depended whether our mission should be carried to a successful issue. For the last half hour we had had hanging from our bridge-rail the signal agreed upon with Casement.

Now with the naked eye, and now with our glasses, we scanned the surroundings. Nothing to be seen.

Nothing moving in any direction. Not a boat on the water or any sign of life. The whole neighbourhood seemed to be dead. As there was no appreciable current here in the inner part of the bay, I lay to temporarily with the engines stopped.

When another ten minutes had elapsed and still nothing was to be seen, I began to feel a little uneasy.

A quarter of an hour went by, and from moment to moment our anxiety increased. We waited and waited with beating hearts, silently hoping that the next few seconds would see our wishes fulfilled. In vain. The stillness remained absolute.

Slowly the minutes slid away. The half-hour's grace agreed upon was nearly up. I got out my secret orders and read them through once more. There could be no doubt; I was at the right spot, and exactly at the right time. But where were the Irish?

My orders were, 'If, after half an hour's wait, none of the aforesaid vessels or persons are at the rendezvous, and there does not appear to be any possibility of communicating with them, you are to use your own judgment as to whether to proceed in or to turn back.'

The half-hour was up. I considered for a few moments what I should do.

Turn back? No. Under no circumstances would I give up the game, so long as any possibility remained of carrying out a landing. But how to carry it out? To run in in full daylight, without having established communication with Casement or any of his people

would be foolish. I might just as well make the English a present of the munitions.

Another point was that the channel beside the pier was only six feet deep at low tide, so that, if I were obliged to blow up the ship to prevent her falling into the hands of the enemy, hardly half of her hull would be under water!

It looked, too, as if something had gone wrong. On the slopes of Kerry Head, the northern buttress of Tralee Bay, and in several other places, clouds of smoke were rising from the hills. Could these be warnings intended for us? But if so, where the deuce were the men who had lit them.

My whole crew had, in the meantime, gathered on deck, and as we were all taking the same risk, I had the whole ship's company up to the bridge to confer on the situation. To my delight none of them thought of turning back so long as there was any hope whatever of carrying out our mission. As we talked things over we came more and more to the conclusion that the English had got wind of our enterprise.

The absence of the Irish might, of course, have various grounds. It was quite possible that the wireless message announcing our coming had arrived in a mutilated condition, or that it had been badly deciphered, and that either for this or for the previous reason it had been obscure if not wholly unintelligible. It was also possible that the code-word which it had been agreed to insert in the German wireless news, just before the evening military communique, as a

sign to the Irish [1] that our expedition had started, had been accidentally omitted, and the Irish had consequently thought that something had occurred to prevent our coming.

But it seemed to me on the whole, much more probable that the Irish of the west had not been content to look on idly at the activity of their brethren on the east coast, and had also themselves started disturbances, which had led to the proclamation of martial law on the west coast also. As I have mentioned earlier, this had been suggested to me by a paragraph in the papers before I left Berlin.

If the Irish had really committed this folly, my task would be rendered immensely more difficult, if not impossible, for it might be taken as certain that a number of the Sinn Feiners concerned would be already under arrest, and that the English would at least have got wind of our intended landing. That might account for the sudden appearance of the battery which we had passed shortly before.

But where was Casement all this time? Was he already in Ireland, and perhaps already arrested, or was he still on a submarine which had not yet arrived? Here, too, there were all kinds of possibilities. The submarine might have had an accident and turned

[1] A message of Count Bernstorff's, quoted in the *Times* of 25th May, 1918, mentions that there were numerous private wireless receiving stations in Ireland. The German news reports, sent out to all the world by the great Nauen station, would be easy to pick up, and amid a long succession of news items a cleverly chosen code word—meaning by pre-arrangement, 'Expedition started,' or the like—would easily escape notice, except from those who were on the look-out for it.

back; or bad weather, or engine trouble, might have delayed the voyage. Again, it was not impossible that the submarine with Casement on board had already been here, and after finding how the land lay had gone back some distance to meet us—perhaps to warn us. In the latter case it might be assumed that towards evening the submarine would again return to the rendezvous.

There were certainly possibilities enough to keep one guessing, but I felt pretty sure that the Irish in the west had broken out prematurely, and the English, in consequence, had taken measures to deal with our plan, as well as with the Irish rising.

Assuming, then, as the most probable hypothesis, that the principal leaders including, perhaps, Casement himself, had been arrested, but that those who remained would make an effort to carry out the plan as best they could. It seemed most likely that they would wait for nightfall before attempting to communicate with me.

I had abandoned the idea of leaving the bay again, and returning after dark, as being too suspicious a manœuvre. On the other hand, to continue to lie here indefinitely would also be likely to awaken suspicion. I therefore decided to explore the inner part of the bay.

At half-speed I headed for the shore between Fenit and Kerry Head. While working slowly round the north point of Inishtooskert, some of the smaller islands lying behind it came into view. Some of these seemed to be inhabited, but none of the inhabitants were to

be seen. We could now see also the first signs of Fenit, a little pier with a lighthouse. Behind it rose the masts of one or two small sailing vessels, and to one side a congeries of brick buildings—the 'town.' The whole thing had a depressing look. The only imposing feature in the picture was the ring of high, bare hills which surrounded the bay. Nothing whatever to attract our interest—Stay, what was that? Was not there a man standing on the pier? There certainly was! At the base of the flagstaff, from which hung the folds of the English ensign, there tramped to and fro at the usual mechanical sentry-go, an unmistakable Tommy with his rifle over his shoulder. Here, too, then, the military were in occupation. Evidently everything was prepared for our coming.

In striking contrast to his warlike exterior, was the absolute lack of intelligence in the sentry, who seemed to take no notice whatever of us, though we were now lying, as large as life, only a few hundred yards before him.

We looked in vain for further soldiers, or any indication of the proximity of a large military force. Did they want to lure us into a trap?

The pier was now so close to us that with the glasses we could make out every object upon it; so, of course, everything on board could be equally clearly seen, if any one was watching us. I therefore turned gradually away towards the north, to have a look at the flat coast below Kerry Head. Perhaps I might there find an opportunity to get in touch with the Sinn Feiners.

After we had steamed all round the upper part of the bay, however, all hope of this kind had to be abandoned. Though we showed our signals more and more boldly as time went on, no one took the slightest notice of us.

The situation became more and more extraordinary. For two solid hours we had been cruising about in the bay, it was beginning to grow dusk, and there had not been the slightest sign from the land. The fact that no one had taken the slightest notice of our presence, or of our peculiar behaviour, confirmed me more and more in the theory that there was some kind of a concealed trap. Neither I nor any of my men found it possible to believe that the English really took us for a harmless trader, *as afterwards proved to be the case.* Such carelessness was so utterly contrary to our German ideas of duty and discipline that we supposed this possibility to be entirely excluded.

We were therefore glad when night fell and darkness shielded us from inquisitive glances. Instead of flags we now used a green light, which we showed at short intervals both towards land and sea. Hour after hour passed and nothing happened. Darkness reigned everywhere, even in the town. Only on the pier there burned a small green light—the pier-head light intended to show incoming vessels the entrance to the harbour. From time to time we imagined we saw a signal light in one of the houses to the south-east; but always the glasses showed that we were mistaken.

As midnight drew near, it became noticeably

brighter—no wonder, for towards one o'clock the moon would rise. I once more approached the pier, this time within six hundred yards, and at the risk of discovery showed my green light once again. Then, when this last attempt proved fruitless, I steamed slowly back to the rendezvous off Inishtooskert.

Cautiously we felt our way along the cliffs to the anchorage. So still was the night that even on the forecastle the stroke of our propeller-blades could be clearly heard. It must have been an hour and a half after midnight when the anchor rattled down into the depths and we brought up in the shadow of Inishtooskert, in what seemed to us a hiding-place well screened in every direction. If the sentry on the pier was not asleep, he must, no doubt, have heard the rattle of the anchor chain. But nothing happened.

The moon had meanwhile risen, but as we lay close under the west side of the island we could count on being in deep shadow till close on the dawn.

Hour after hour passed, and as morning approached my hope that the Irish would manage to communicate with us during the night gradually faded away. When at last day dawned, I gave up the game for lost. Useless to run boldly alongside Fenit Pier, for who could suppose we should be allowed to unload our munitions unmolested; useless to pretend an accident to the machinery, for at once we should have a swarm of officials on board; impracticable to send men ashore in a boat at some outlying spot to make inquiries, for I could not spare a man, in view of future eventualities.

And yet I hated to turn back. The one thing that gave me some small consolation was to find that all my men were equally unwilling to do so.

Well, but, if we stay, how long will they let us lie here? We had not long to wait for an answer. I was just discussing the question with my second, when suddenly we were startled by a shout from the look-out man: 'Steamer on the starboard bow.' . . . 'The pilot steamer!'

With all our thoughts concentrated for so long on the coming of the pilot, it was small wonder if, electrified by this shout, we leapt to the conclusion that the small steamer which was now rounding Kerry Head was actually bringing the pilot to us. I myself sprang to the signal halliards prepared to hoist our recognition signal; but as I did so, I kept an eye fixed on the steamer, which was heading straight for us. That was fortunate, for in the next few moments she ran up, not the Irish pilot flag, but the British naval ensign.

I personally did not hesitate a moment, but took to flight, that is to say, in accordance with an arrangement made for such cases, I faded away to my cabin, leaving it to the mate, Düsselmann, to stage the comedy which was now to open. All but a few of the men had also disappeared. Behind the curtain of my window I could watch comfortably the further development of events. A loud-voiced objurgation addressed to some of the men, and the heavy steps passing to and fro over my cabin told me that Düsselmann had already taken up his rôle. I looked at my watch. It was shortly after 5 a.m.

The first thing that struck me about the steamer was that she seemed to be in no hurry, and that the men on deck seemed to be still half asleep; the second, that the life-boats which hung at each side of her deck were dummies in painted metal, between which was concealed a quick-firing gun—a real live outpost-boat, therefore. On both sides of the bow flaunted in large lettering the name *Shatter II.*[1] Her officers did not appear to be distinguished for smartness and resolution, for they stopped their engines while still at a very discreet distance from us, and gathered in a group with their heads together, frequently pointing in our direction—evidently holding a council of war. That lasted about five minutes, then they got under way again, and circled two or three times round our ship, taking care not to come too near. They seemed somehow to show a lack of confidence in us. After a while they stopped again, and I saw them examining us through their glasses.

Before leaving the bridge I had hurriedly given an order to get the hatches closed down as rapidly as possible. The time had been too short, however, to complete the work. In answer to a question through the voice-pipe, the officer of the watch informed me that only hatchway No. 2, which was right under the bridge, had been hastily covered. That was a serious matter, for almost the whole business was plain to be seen by our English friends if they cared to look. On the port side, forward, there were even

[1] This name does not appear in the list of auxiliary craft in the Navy List for April, 1916.

a few cases of munitions, with inscriptions such as '1000 English cartridges,' '2000 Russian cartridges,' standing on deck, where they had been brought up ready to be landed promptly.

On board the *Shatter* weighty consultations seemed to be the order of the day, for it was nearly a quarter of an hour longer before she found courage, after cruising round us yet once more, to come alongside at about twenty yards distance. Then I saw a uniformed figure with megaphone in hand preparing to begin a conversation with my officer of the watch. This was apparently the commanding officer of the proud warship. I inferred this from the fact that he ordered several of his men, armed with rifles and pistols, to take up their posts near him, in order, no doubt, to season the conversation, if need be, with a little peppering of shot. This rather reassured me; especially when I took a second look at the 'commanding officer.' An undersized, stocky figure, with a typical whisky-drinker's face, the colour of which was scarcely distinguishable from the red scarf which he wore round his neck. I had at once the feeling that things were going to be rather amusing. And so, in fact, it turned out.

CHAPTER XVIII

UNWELCOME GUESTS

THE following interesting dialogue, which was conducted in English, now took place between the captain of the *Shatter* and my mate.

'Where are you from?'

No answer.

'Hallo! Where are you from?'

Again no answer.

'Goddam! I asked you where are you from.'

Düsselmann at last took the trouble to answer. and shouted across in a loud voice, 'Good-morning

'Hell and damnation,' shouted the English captain 'I don't want your civilities. I want to know where you come from.'

'Then, first of all, would you mind telling me who you are?' answered the mate calmly.

'I am the captain of this ship,' was the answer; 'are you the captain of the *Aud*?'

'No, I am the second officer.'

'Where is your captain?'

'Sh! He is asleep.'

'Well, wake him at once.'

'The devil I will! The old man would half kill

me if I called him in the middle of the night,' answered Düsselmann.

'Very well, then, I'll do it,' the Englishman roared, and he went a shade redder in the face with anger.

'What, you want to get killed?' asked the voice from above.

'No, but I'm coming on board to knock the sleep out of your captain. You will see how the captain of a ship in the service of His Britannic Majesty does it.'

'I'd like to see you,' answered the mate, with a laugh; 'let's see you do it.'

One by one, nearly the whole of the crew of the *Shatter* had come on deck and were now interested spectators, while the captain, with much circumstance, manœuvred his ship to within a couple of yards of ours. The deck of his little steamer lay so far below me that I could no longer see the men standing on it. After a while I heard the English captain shout, 'How am I to get up the side?' The laconic answer came, 'I suppose the captain of a ship in the service of His Britannic Majesty will show us how it is done.' There now came a long pause while they were doubtlessly wondering on the *Shatter* how to scale the steep side of our ship without the aid of a ladder. Then I heard the Englishman call out—this time in a particularly polite tone—'Please let down a ladder.'

'Certainly, with the greatest pleasure,' the mate answered. 'But I must first call the crew, they are all still asleep.' Then he lumbered slowly down from the bridge and went forward cursing to rouse the

men. As he went I heard a voice below me say, 'Goddam, this damned fellow is no fool,' a statement which I silently endorsed. The crew of the *Shatter* had apparently forgotten that they could support their demand with force of arms. It was quite a long time before the second mate returned from the forecastle along with a couple of the crew, who, to all appearances, had come straight from their bunks. Then a ladder was let down, and with much puffing and blowing the Englishman clambered up, followed by a couple of his men. As they posted themselves right in front of my window I had to quickly pull the blind across.

'Now then, where's your captain?' asked the Englishman; and I heard the mate answer 'Don't shout so loud, man. If you wake this skipper you will know about it. He is the most-feared captain in all Norway.'

'But it is most urgent that I speak to him. So come along with me.'

'All right,' answered Düsselmann, but you will have to go first!'

'No, you go in front,' answered the Englishman, who began to think there was something uncanny about the business.

'Oh, all right then.' That was all I heard, for I quickly bolted the door and made all ready for the reception while the pair were coming along the cabin passage. Knocking, first circumspectly, then harder and harder, they tried to rouse the captain of the *Aud*. Leaning my head back somewhat, I answered

a couple of times with a half audible curse. Then there was silence for a while. All I could hear now was whispering voices ; and then the knocking began again. This was more than I could stand. I pulled off my vest and tie, put my hair in suitable disarray, and went cursing loudly to the door. In accordance with our plan I spoke Low German, on the assumption that the Englishman would probably take it for Norwegian.

'Damnation ! What's the meaning of this confounded drumming in the middle of the night?' I shouted in my deepest bass while I opened the door.

'Good-morning, sir ! I am very sorry to have to trouble you so early in the morning.' With these words my English 'colleague' greeted me, while at the same time he carefully took a step backwards. In his left hand he held a rusty pistol which might well have dated from the time of Nelson. With his right he touched his grease-stained cap in curt salute. Behind him stood, besides my mate, six English seamen armed to the teeth and clothed in rather fantastic and dirty uniforms. I put on the sternest appearance I could possibly assume, and then addressed him in browbeating tone in English. 'If you wish to speak to me, be good enough to wait until I have dressed.' As I spoke, I slammed the door in his face. All this happened so quickly that the Englishman did not know where he was.

There was quite a long pause before I heard him say to the mate, 'Are all your Norwegian captains such bounders?' And Düsselmann replied, 'All I

can tell you is that this one is a regular Tartar.' Then he invited him to take a seat in the mess-room, which the Englishman very willingly did.

I now knew enough to be able to play my rôle in the comedy. The popping of a cork next door told me that Düsselmann had already started the good work. For nearly a quarter of an hour I pounded up and down the room, splashed in the wash-basin, and joyfully anticipated the scene that was now coming. Men of this description could be managed without bloodshed. There was no doubt about that. My sole anxiety was lest these fellows, while they were still sober, should go smelling round the holds. But my men had cleverly understood the situation and had invited the crew of the *Shatter* to have 'a little drink' in the forecastle, so that for the present there was nothing to fear from them.

I opened wide the whisky locker under my bunk, so that any one sitting on the sofa could easily see the bottles of whisky and brandy standing in serried ranks, and then shouted into the mess that I was ready for the interview. The man with the whisky nose appeared immediately and took the seat I offered him on the sofa. It was only now that I saw to my horror that my uniform jacket, sword-belt, and cutlass were hanging beside the washstand. I promptly threw the towel, which I still held in my hand, over them, and had the satisfaction of noting that the Englishman had spotted nothing. During the conversation which ensued I was at first very surly and curt. When the usual questions, 'Where was I from?'

and 'Where was I bound for?' had been disposed of, the Englishman asked me what my object was in anchoring here. I told him my engines had broken down, and that I had been forced to make for Tralee. He then expressed a wish to have a look at the holds. I was not particularly keen on that, but as I dared not let him see that I at once expressed my willingness. So we went on deck and proceeded first of all, needless to say, to No. 2 hold. There I shouted to Düsselmann (who in the meantime had gone back to the bridge after giving me one of his sly winks), to send me a couple of hands to take the hatches off. They came at once; and I had now reached a rather unpleasant stage in the proceedings. The next few seconds must decide if the comedy was going to succeed or if I should have to render the Englishman harmless. Fortunately, no one could see us, for the *Shatter* had in the meantime made fast to our stern. The doughty warrior had forgotten his old pistol in my cabin, where my servant Bruhns had no doubt already found it. With nervous attention I followed every movement of the Englishman, ready at any moment to knock him down if necessary. As I was a much bigger man than he this would have been easy. I held my Browning pistol ready cocked in my pocket.

When the first hatch was removed I gave a sigh of relief, for I saw that my men had found time to cover up the holds in the lower deck also. So the most important thing was hidden. The few pit-props which we had left between decks the day before were

now to prove our salvation. As soon as the Englishman's eye caught sight of the wood strewn all round the sides of the hold he asked what the explanation was. I told him about the terrible storm which we had experienced, and how the whole of our deck-cargo, as well as some of the cargo in the hold, had shifted. Any sailor in his senses would have noticed at once the absurdity of this explanation, for when a ship's cargo shifts the hold presents a much more disorderly appearance than was the case here. The man appeared to be as little of a sailor as he was of a soldier, for he nodded his head and found my explanation quite reasonable. Emboldened by his ignorance I asked him if I should open the lower hold also, 'Not that you will see very much,' I remarked by the way, 'everything is so higgledy-piggledy down there.' At the same time I placed a small ladder for him, and with a gesture invited him to go down. Was he afraid that the ladder would not carry his weight, or did he think the descent would be too unpleasant? Anyway, he waved the ladder aside and said curtly, 'All right.' Then, without another look at the inside of the hold, he related to me how he had weathered this awful storm here in Tralee Bay, what a terrible time he had had, and how, by his clever handling, he had preserved *Shatter II.* from destruction. So excited did he get over his account that he did not notice that I had shepherded him back to the door of the cabin.

Thank goodness! At any rate I had now got him away from that dangerous No. 1 hold, which, of course,

was still wide open. In order to cut the business short I now asked him if he would like to see my papers. As he answered in the affirmative I pushed him into the cabin, and the next moment he was again seated on the sofa with me opposite him. Then I offered him a fat Havana and ordered the steward to bring two cups of coffee.

This, of course, was all by-play, for an Englishman like this would certainly not drink coffee first thing in the morning. So he turned away quite angrily when Bruhns put down a large cup of coffee under his nose. To my joy I noticed that the whisky cupboard had not escaped his attention. He stared and stared between my legs at the locker, so I remarked quite casually, 'Perhaps you would rather have a little whisky?'

That did it. With an energetic 'You're the man for me,' he slapped me on the shoulder, and with characteristic shamelessness started to go to the locker himself and to pick out the best 'White Horse.' I let him go ahead, and in the meantime fetched a big tumbler, so that his ration should not be too small. Then I held out the water-bottle and asked, 'How much?' But the Englishman waved it aside, declaring 'No water! You know we never see this stuff here.' What better could I have wished?

The conversation now became fairly lively, and when the Englishman asked to see the ship's papers I very willingly got out my whole collection of smoke-blackened documents. He pawed them over repeatedly, but I noticed at the first glance that he had no earthly

idea of the meaning of the documents. He handed me a book to sign. I wrote myself down in several places as 'Niels Larsen, captain of the Norwegian steamer *Aud*, with pit-props and piece goods from Christiania, for Cardiff and Genoa.' At the mention of pit-props he remarked cheerfully that this cargo was badly wanted in England, and in confirmation of this statement he emptied his glass at a gulp. Without 'by your leave' he at once poured himself out another glass, and assured me again and again that the coffee which I drank was very bad for the nerves. Referring to the Norwegian newspapers lying in front of us, which were now three weeks old, I asked him if he could let me have a few English papers, as I was anxious to know the latest war news. He got up at once, went up on deck, and going over to the side shouted an order to the men on his ship to send over immediately all the papers lying in his cabin.

The conversation now turned on the events of the war, with the result that I found myself in the peculiar position of having to join with one of my deadly enemies in cursing my beloved Germany, which nearly broke my heart. I would have preferred to have knocked the fellow down for some of the ridiculous statements he made. But in view of what I hoped to obtain from him I had to swallow it all and chime in with him. In the meantime my second mate had joined us, accompanied by one of the English petty officers, who carried a huge parcel of the latest papers under his arm. I now went back into the cabin with the petty officer, offered him a whisky, and cast my

eye rapidly over the papers. Chance decreed that a paragraph in the second paper I took up caught my eye. It stated that on Wednesday, *i.e.* two days before our arrival, by order of the English officer commanding the Tralee district, several Sinn Fein leaders had been arrested in Fenit on suspicion of being concerned in a conspiracy against the English Government. So this was the answer to the riddle! And the paper stated that an Irish pilot (whose name I have forgotten) had been arrested on a similar charge. There could be no doubt about it. It must have been our pilot, the man for whom we had been waiting so anxiously here. It was no easy task for me to conceal from the petty officer the difficulty I had in following his remarks on all sorts of unimportant subjects.

Fortunately, the other two now reappeared, and I was able to switch off. I handed the papers to Düsselmann, holding my thumb on the paragraph in question so that he noticed it at once. At the same moment the English captain clapped me on the back, and said in a reassuring tone, 'Capt'n, you need have no fear of U-boats. I'll keep a look-out for you.' As I did not at once grasp the meaning of these words he added in explanation, 'Your mate told me you were very much afraid of the U-boats and feared that you would never return from this voyage. Of course, I can understand this in the case of a man who is engaged to a girl in Christiania and is to be married in two months' time. But don't worry. So long as you are compelled to remain here for repairs I will

lie at the entrance to the bay and take care that no U-boat gets in. And now, in return for that, give me another drink.' Suiting the action to the word, he poured out drinks for himself and the petty officer.

I am afraid my face did not give the impression of much intelligence at this moment. Not that I had not understood his words, but I feared that Düsselmann by his well-intended remark had done me more harm than good. If the Englishman really should keep a look-out he might possibly succeed in sinking our submarine, which might still appear at any moment. The more I attempted by all sorts of objectives to dissuade him from his purpose, the more obstinately he clung to this plan. 'Out of gratitude,' as he said. Then he swallowed his glass of whisky in one gulp, while big tears rolled down his maudlin face. It now appeared to me imperative that I should have a few minutes' undisturbed conversation with Düsselmann; so I summoned the first mate and asked him to look after my guests. Making the excuse that I just wanted to have a look round and see that all was well, I left the cabin, which was now almost unbearable for tobacco smoke and the smell of whisky. Düsselmann followed me at once.

We debated what we should do with the fellows. It would have been a simple matter to overpower them and tie them up, for I now learned that the English, who were sitting in the forecastle with my crew, were dead drunk, and that the same was probably true of the men who remained on the *Shatter*. For Düsselmann had had the inspiration to present

four bottles of whisky to the boat's crew. But the execution of this plan would not have helped us, for we had no manner of use for the steamer, and we could not sink her without exciting suspicion. Now, too, when we knew that arrests had already been made in Tralee and that the district was probably under martial law, it would be useless if we manned the *Shatter* ourselves and ran in to reconnoitre and try to get in touch with the Sinn Feiners. This would cost me at least four men, and I should probably never see them again. We were too much under the observation of the various signalling stations to dismount the *Shatter's* guns and take them over. And there was no other anchorage in the neighbourhood where we could do it. We therefore came to the conclusion that the best thing to do was to make the fellows dead drunk and then let them go. We dared not stay here later than the next morning. If by that time nothing had happened I intended to try and break through into the Atlantic and start commerce-raiding. In any case I intended during the coming night to send a boat ashore, even at the risk of being discovered. By this time things were getting lively in my cabin. The huge quantity of whisky they had consumed was evoking various discords apparently intended to represent 'It's a Long Way to Tipperary.' And coming from the forecastle also singing, or rather most damnable bawling, could be heard. Well, let them enjoy themselves! We decided we would sound them thoroughly and then get rid of them as quickly as possible.

When I re-entered the cabin the worthy captain held out to me a photograph which he had taken from the wall, asking if that was my fiancée from Christiania. I laughed and said it was. It was a picture of my sister holding her youngest hopeful in her arms! However, I had the satisfaction of knowing that the Englishmen were quite convinced of our Norwegian nationality. They had now got to brandy I noticed. If they continued to mix their drinks in this fashion they would assuredly die of alcoholic poisoning. The captain, although speech had become a matter of some difficulty to him, was getting more and more loquacious. Between his hiccoughs he told us that he was on outpost duty here, but that he made himself quite comfortable all the same. Two hours before dark at the very latest he always proceeded to a quiet anchorage behind Kerry Head in order to be able to sleep in comfort. His crew, too, he added, were all in favour of a good night's sleep! The only privation they suffered was lack of whisky, this being strictly prohibited on British warships. That, he said, was the reason why he was so glad to seize this opportunity and to find so kind a host. I nodded benevolently, and asked him how long he had been stationed here. 'Not very long,' he replied. 'I was sent here a couple of weeks ago from Aberdeen, mainly in order to intercept a German steamer which is expected to arrive here at any moment.'

We of the *Aud* involuntarily glanced at each other—the business was getting more and more interesting

every moment. When I had recovered from my first astonishment I asked a few questions. 'Yes, I suppose you think the Germans don't break through the blockade,' said the captain. 'Well, I assure you they do. Look at the *Möwe*, for instance. She got back all right.' And in order to wash out the impression which the return of the *Möwe* made on his English sailor's heart he hastily took a big drink, the whisky trickling down from the corners of his mouth. Then he went on again: 'Look here, I will tell you how it is. You Norwegians are good fellows; so there is no harm in my telling you, although it is really supposed to remain absolutely secret. Well, we, that is to say, the Naval Staff, have discovered that these damned swine, the Germans, want to join the Irish in bringing about a revolution. That is why they chose me in order to capture the auxiliary cruiser which is to come in here and bring arms for the Irish. Look at the harbour and the entire bay—the whole place is bristling with guns! What a fine reception the Germans will get from us. Of course the beggars are clever—but we English are a jolly sight cleverer.'

I could no longer contain myself. I burst out laughing, and the first and second mate joined in. This capped all that we had experienced so far! Fortunately, the Englishman thought we were laughing at the stupidity of the Germans, for he repeated again and again, 'Yes, they are terribly stupid, in spite of all their cunning!' I now knew all I wanted to know. I rushed to the locker, and telling this splendid, clever Englishman that I wished him the very best

of luck on his quest, I got out another half-dozen bottles of whisky and a box of cigars, which I presented to him and his brave crew as a token of my respect. He himself was incapable of carrying the bottles, so we stuffed them in his pockets and those of his petty officer, telling the gentlemen that we must now get to work and must beg them to leave the ship. And they, with a loving look at their presents, declared their readiness to go. As he was getting up the captain beckoned to me, and, with his hand to my ear, hiccoughed, 'If by any chance you catch sight of the German cruiser out there be careful that she does not sink you. Inform a signalling station at once, or one of our many cruisers which are waiting in the offing for her. You will be well rewarded by the Government. I tell you that as a—friend!' I laughed, and promised to do so, and then pushed the two of them out. I stood upon no ceremony in dismissing the horribly drunken pair. The rest I left to my crew, and in about ten minutes Düsselmann was able to report to me that all the English, dead drunk, had left the ship, and that *Shatter II.* was steering a zigzag course for the mouth of the bay. Later we found out that he kept his word and kept watch for us against submarines at a distance of five miles. Poor unsuspecting fool!

The first thing I did then was to sit down in the cabin in order to regain my breath, cool down, and collect my thoughts. We had entertained our guests for two solid hours! If I had been told that in six weeks the world would come to an end I might have

believed it. But if any man had told me that in my own cabin the captain of an English outpost boat would warn me against myself I should have thought him mad. What we had just gone through was so incredibly funny that I might have thought it a dream if the statement of the *Shatter* captain had not reminded us of the seriousness of our position. And very serious it was.

All hope of landing or of communicating with the Sinn Feiners had now disappeared. There was treachery about! Danger on all sides, whichever way I looked! We had chanced into a wasp's nest and could count ourselves lucky if we got out again in the next twenty-four hours. I summoned the whole crew to the upper deck and outlined my scheme. In order at any rate to save my valuable cargo I proposed to leave the bay immediately after dark and try if I could get out thirty miles into the Atlantic before the moon rose. Trusting in the luck that had till now accompanied us I was quite confident we should succeed in escaping. Once we were out on the high seas the future could take care of itself. I had before my mind the possibility of selling our cargo in Spain, which was only a day and a half's sail distant, or perhaps in Mexico, if we could get there. To leave the bay at this moment would have been a blunder, for it could not be supposed that all the English were such silly fools as our friends of the *Shatter*. The signalling stations round us had witnessed the visit from the *Shatter* in the morning, but they would most certainly have been suspicious if we were now suddenly

to up anchor and away, for they were not going to believe that we had run in in order to enjoy the scenery of Tralee Bay by night. Also they would undoubtedly have noticed that we had not yet been really inside the harbour. If they should ask the *Shatter* why we were remaining here the explanation would be that we had trouble with the engines, which would cause much less suspicion than suddenly clearing out and saying good-bye to Tralee. We were all agreed on this, and I therefore decided to remain if possible until nightfall. If some stout Sinn Feiner should turn up before that time he would certainly make every effort to give us a sign if nothing more.

As a precautionary measure I had the munitions covered up with ropes and other rubbish and then had the hatches closed. You never can tell! Then the chief engineer, Rost, and his men got to work and thoroughly overhauled the engines in preparation for a run 'all out.' While this was being done the forenoon passed without any other event of interest.

CHAPTER XIX

A STERN CHASE

SHORTLY after 1 p.m. we noticed a small steamer beyond Kerry Head on the north side of the Shannon. The foam at her bows told us that she was travelling at high speed. As she was holding a westerly course I had at first no suspicions. She was still so far off that even with our prismatic glasses I could make out nothing. I therefore got the big glass, which had already stood me in good stead so many times, and perceived to my astonishment that the steamer had a long gun completely uncovered mounted on her forecastle deck. Her tall top masts showed that she had a wireless installation.

Another patrol-boat, then,—but this time a much bigger and more modern one than our friend the *Shatter*. I handed my glass to the mate, so that he could see for himself. He had scarcely focused on the boat when he hastily exclaimed, 'She is altering course—she's coming straight for us.' I could see now with the naked eye that this was a fact. The place was getting unhealthy for us, and we needed no time for deliberation over our next move.

'All hands on deck, stand by to weigh anchor!' 'Have steam up for full speed.' All hands were at their

stations in a moment. The capstan creaked and groaned in every joint. Bump, bump. All at once it stopped. The anchor had evidently got wedged between the rocks. I felt as if I were standing on hot coals. I had actually put the telegraph forward in order to simply part the cable or to slip it, when the capstan started to turn again. As soon as ever the anchor was free we started. Course, due west! And high time it was, for the stranger was visibly drawing nearer. We judged the distance to be at most nine miles. So long as she did not catch us up we were all right, for we were still a neutral steamer, so far as she was concerned. I had worked out in my head what had happened. Loop Head had presumably warned the naval base at Limerick about us, and the admiral in command there, probably not trusting too much to his *Shatter II.*, had sent out a bigger boat to Tralee to have a closer look at the suspicious Norwegian. (A high English officer assured me later that my guess was practically correct.) A flotilla flag at her mast-head, and the fact that she altered course to south-west as soon as we started, confirmed my conjecture. Her unmistakable intention, therefore, was to cut us off. It was now more than ever a question of legging it. (We could no more risk a second examination than we could risk an exchange of shells in which we, with our old Russian rifles and home-made guns would certainly have come off second best.)

In order to get full steam quickly, I ordered all hands to the stokehold. I myself went to the wheel and kept the *Aud* quite close to the coast, for the rocky

shore is here so steep that one can approach with safety within forty yards. The dense clouds of smoke from our funnel swept along the rocky wall and whirled into the deep fissures, as if drawn into an airshaft.

The English boat was coming dangerously near. The question now was which of us had the longest legs. We reckoned she was doing twelve knots or more; we, on former occasions, had never done more than eleven. It was therefore to be expected that she would slowly but surely catch us. That was to be avoided at any cost.

In order to further encourage the men in the stoke-hold I called down to them from time to time through the voice-pipe the distance between us. They worked like horses, and after some time I was able to state that we were keeping our lead. Why the English boat did not at least send a shot across our bows is still a mystery to me, especially when she found that we took no notice whatever of her constant signals.

In the meantime we had approached our old friend the *Shatter*, which was leisurely wallowing up and down just under the battery at about 500 yards from the shore. She seemed to have noticed us at last, for she turned slowly and steamed towards us. I therefore called the second mate up on the bridge, telling him to keep his eye on the *Shatter*, and gave the wheel to A.B. Strehlau.

We had gradually come so near that without the glasses we could now perceive the guns of the battery trained on us. A lively exchange of signals was taking place between the battery and our pursuer.

And then a signal was hoisted on the *Shatter* also. Unfortunately, it was impossible to read it for there was not a breath of wind. The devil! Had the rascal been deceiving us, and was the drunkenness all play-acting, in order to be able to attack us in front in conjunction with the battery, while the other boat attacked us behind?

For one moment I was inclined to fear some such stratagem, for it appeared impossible that the *Shatter's* signal could mean anything but 'Stop at once.' As a precautionary measure I therefore ordered all preparations for blowing up the ship. At the same time I gave the order to starboard the helm, in order to ram the *Shatter*, for I was determined that if we went down we should take her with us. The next few seconds must decide our fate. We were going straight for the *Shatter* at full speed, but she made no effort to escape being rammed. What could be the explanation? I gazed steadily through the glasses. Suddenly the *Shatter* turned to port, and as she heeled over for an instant on account of the sudden turn, we read the signal. We could not believe our eyes. From the signal halliards of the *Shatter* fluttered the signal I knew so well in the old days, 'T.D.L.'—'*Bon voyage.*'

I rushed to the helm, tore the wheel round to port, and anxiously counted the seconds till the *Aud* began to answer the helm. Fortunately, the high speed at which we were going made the rudder effective—but only just in time. All our lives hung on the fraction of a second. In the very next second we shot past the English boat not a ship's length off.

All this, of course, happened in much less time than it takes to tell it. But the greatest surprise of all was still reserved for us. The brave captain was standing on his little bridge holding on like grim death to the rail. His crew stood, or rather lurched, about on the deck. At the moment when we ran past him at full speed he tore his hat off, waved it round his head, yelling like a Red Indian, and called for 'Three Cheers for the *Aud*,' to which his crew bawled an enthusiastic response.

If at this moment I had had a couple of bottles of whisky by me on the bridge I would have willingly thrown them to the crew of the *Shatter* out of gratitude for this ovation; for there can be no doubt that the conduct of the *Shatter* crew at the very least made the battery officer uncertain of his ground. (I heard later that the battery, in response to a signal from our pursuer, was just about to fire at us while we were standing away from it, but did not do so because the cheers of the *Shatter* crew seemed to indicate that we had been the victims of some mistake.) Of course, we answered the greeting of the *Shatter* with cap-waving and a friendly 'Good-bye!' Düsselmann, in fact, ran up the signal, 'X.O.R.'—Thank you. To cap it all, I dipped my flag, as we left the most friendly Englishman I have ever met on the seas. None of us, I am certain, will ever forget this moment.

It was not till afterwards that I heard from the crew that our lives hung once more in the balance. One of the crew had mistaken my order to dip the flag and was under the impression that I had said 'Tyske,'

which was our pre-arranged signal for blowing up the ship. He was just about to break out the German naval ensign at the stern, and the chief engineer stood ready with the fuse, when the mistake was realised. So this little *entr'acte* went off all right—at any rate so far as we were concerned. Not for the captain of the *Shatter*, however; for I heard some months later that the English Admiralty considered his conduct too 'gentlemanlike,' and deprived him of his commission after a court-martial had sentenced him to imprisonment.

The battery now lay a good mile astern, but we were still within range of its guns and our pursuer was close on our heels. We therefore had to make every effort to increase the distance, which was, of course, largely a question of correct steering. So the first mate took over the wheel, while the second mate worked the engine-room telegraph. Down below my brave stokers, half naked and with sweat literally pouring down, toiled at the glowing furnaces, while the others untiringly fetched baskets of coal from the bunkers. The engineers stood at their stations in the engine-room, ready each moment to carry out the orders as they came from the bridge. We were steaming with every ounce of pressure we could get.

Meanwhile, the English boat had drawn nearer. The second mate at once shouted down the tube, 'Get up more steam, the Englishman will be alongside in no time.' And with a sinister smile he added, 'If you fellows can't make more steam, say the word. The fuse is ready. But in that case please label your

bones.' The noise of shovels, the banging of furnace-doors, and a loud cheer were the answer that came up from the engine-room. The chief-engineer came puffing up the ladder and shouted to me, 'Captain, if we go on like this the boilers will burst. The steam is long past the red mark.'

'I thought it was long ago. But it's no good worrying about that, my dear fellow. We must break through at all costs. As it is, we have still got a chance; but if this fellow astern of us succeeds in catching us we can make our wills.' He shook his head seriously. Then he plunged down again into his own domain below, and encouraged his men to work as if the devil were at our heels.

By now the wireless boat had come up with the *Shatter*, which was still making leisurely for Tralee. To our joy we noticed the other vessel carefully manœuvring in order to come alongside the *Shatter*. This gave us a good start, and we could see several people jump from the wireless boat, which was letting off a white cloud of hissing steam, on board the *Shatter*. What happened then was not hard to guess. But the captain of the *Shatter* will certainly not reveal it as long as he lives. Unfortunately, we were unable to watch the proceedings from close range.

After an interval of about five minutes the *Shatter* went about and then both boats took up the chase. But our pursuers had lost so much time in laying their ship alongside the *Shatter* that they had little chance of overtaking us, for our brave little *Aud* was now, according to the patent log, doing more than thirteen knots.

The coastline now bent round towards SW., and as we were still keeping the same distance from it, we were soon out of sight of the battery. Keeping the same speed, we ran for another hour and a half, and noted with joy that our pursuers were visibly dropping behind. The English also soon saw the impossibility of overtaking us, for they suddenly turned off to port and steamed slowly towards the coast, where they soon disappeared in one of the many bays.

It was getting on for half-past three, so we must already have put some miles behind us. When the engine-room staff heard that our pursuers had given up the chase they greeted the news with three rousing cheers. We all gave a sigh of relief, especially the chief-engineer, who lost no time now in letting the steam down below the red danger mark on the pressure gauge.

We were now getting near the mouth of the bay. The sea was studded all over with little islands and rocks, some of which projected only a couple of feet out of the water. One of the larger islands aroused our interest. At the foot of the massive, rocky wall there was a semicircular opening of natural formation so big that a sailing-boat could comfortably go through to the far side. Unfortunately, the chart showed so many shallows between these islands that I felt bound, under the circumstances, to take the longer course round the outlying islands, a proceeding which, at any rate, gave me more freedom of movement. And that was at the moment more important than

ever, for it was inconceivable that the captain of the wireless boat, after giving up the hopeless chase, would sit down and do nothing. So we were not particularly pleased when we noticed a lighthouse with signalling station and wireless installation facing the sea on Dunmore Island, the last island on the south side of the bay.

Without doubt these people already knew all about our flight. Fortunately for us, however, they were unarmed, so that we had to reckon only with the fact that they would watch us and report every alteration of our course to the nearest coastguard stations and ships.

The Atlantic now lay before us, and I had the choice of steering north, west, or south. South appeared to me to be the best, for even if we had aroused suspicion the English had so far had no positive proof against us. The Norwegian flag still flew at our stern, and as I had told the captain of the *Shatter* that we were bound for Cardiff and then for Italy, I thought it was best to keep up appearances while it was still daylight, and to steer a southerly course. If a warship should then come along we should be able to justify our course by means of our manifest. Then, when it got dark, I intended to turn westwards in order to get away from the patrolled coastal area.

CHAPTER XX

THE 'PHANTOM SHIP' IN A TRAP

At the mouth of Tralee Bay we met a stiff north wind, and here and there the waves were topped with foam. A couple of small steamers deeply laden were crawling along northwards, hugging the coast, for they were too much afraid of the German submarines to venture out on the open sea. The second one was a Norwegian—'like ourselves.' The name was, on account of the distance, unreadable, but the shape of the vessel was devilishly like that of the *Aud*. I wonder if this was the real *Aud*, which was due back from the Mediterranean just about this time. It would have been a nice *rencontre* for us. Unfortunately, I was unable even afterwards to ascertain the facts. The only information about our double that reached me was a newspaper article some months later which stated that the Norwegian steamer *Aud*, from Bergen, had been torpedoed and sunk on the 2nd of October of the same year.

Favoured by wind and current, we were now steaming at a good speed into the Atlantic, slowly but surely turning away from the coast so as to raise no suspicion. Shall we succeed? . . . I would really have preferred to see the sky overcast and a good high

sea running. That would have been the best protection against the English patrol ships. It was, however, now and afterwards, most beautiful clear weather. Not a wisp of smoke was visible on the horizon. We had still nearly four hours of daylight in front of us.

I need not tell how anxiously we all waited for the sun to go down.

In view of our successful flight from Tralee the crew were already busy with plans for the future. They thought we could now start at once on our war with the dummy guns. They were so pleased with the imminent prospect of commerce-raiding that they sang all sorts of lively songs to the accompaniment of a concertina, and in order to avoid spoiling their fun I did not let them notice how little enthusiasm I have for concerts of this sort.

Towards 6 p.m., a smoke-cloud was noticed in the south-west, which grew larger every moment and rapidly came nearer. Soon afterwards we noticed a second smoke-cloud, and it came so close after the first that it was evidently from the same vessel. So we had a two-funnelled steamer ahead of us. Then the mastheads came in view, the wireless-masts, and the spotting-top. There could be no doubt about it—she was an English warship. We estimated that she was doing at least twenty knots. If we now tried to run away at our tramp-steamer speed she would catch us in a hour—if she did not honour us before then with a shell. So carry on! only cool heads could help us now—together with a fair amount of impudence.

The warship was travelling at top speed, and it was not long before her upper works and then the whole of her hull came into view. It was an auxiliary cruiser, one of the fast channel steamers which in peace-time ply between England and France. By this time we were, of course, at action stations on board the *Aud*; that is to say, all preparations had been made for blowing up the ship, the suspicious material was all packed away in the 'magic-box,' the engines were at half-speed, and I myself was marching dead slow up and down the bridge. We were once more the old tramp-crew of a few days before.

The cruiser was no doubt one of those which had been warned some hours previously by the wireless-ship. What we had to expect this time was, at the very least, a thorough examination of the vessel. And even if we came successfully through this we should probably be escorted to the nearest port, where the suspicious *Aud* would be unloaded and her cargo of munitions revealed. Now followed some minutes of tense expectation. Only half a mile separated us from the cruiser. Her armament, consisting of several 4.5 guns and a number of machine-guns, was clearly visible. We expected she would come within hailing distance. But she did not. Instead of that she steamed alongside us in a zigzag course for about ten minutes. The signal we were expecting never came. Nearly her whole crew stood on deck, gazing at us with curiosity. We went ahead as if it were no concern of ours. But who can describe our astonishment when the English ship, as if she had seen all she wanted to

see, turned sharply east and steamed off as she had come, at top speed! Now, what did this mean? We had no idea at that time that it was the fear of our imaginary 'heavy guns,' our 'torpedoes,' and the 'submarines that were escorting us,' that had kept the cruiser at a distance and had sent her off post-haste for reinforcements! Unfortunately, these were not long in coming up. The sun was now low down in the west and threw such a dazzling glare on the water that it was actually painful to scan the horizon. In doing so we soon made the unpleasant discovery that our cruiser was not the only ship in view. Almost ahead, a little on the starboard bow, another English ship was coming up, and to starboard—yes, what the devil was that? Ahead, astern, in fact all round us, we could see smoke clouds, which, as was soon evident, came from other monsters similar to the first. All auxiliary cruisers, and all of the same type. All the steamers of the channel service seemed to have been concentrated against us.[1]

There was no necessity for deliberation. We were hemmed in all round, and there was no way out. All these ships, armed with guns and machine-guns, against our little *Aud*, whose sole armament consisted of a couple of wooden cannon. And still these fellows

[1] A few days later I learned through an English naval officer that the wireless boat, when off Kerry Head, *i.e.* just after we weighed anchor, had sent an urgent wireless message to Fastnet. The admiral in command there at once sent out a whole swarm of auxiliary cruisers and destroyers against us, about thirty vessels altogether. These boats, by virtue of their great speed, were in a very short time able to form a cordon from Fastnet to beyond the northern outlet from Tralee Bay. So that we should have been caught in any case, no matter what course we had taken.

appeared to be horribly afraid of us, for they still kept their distance, zigzagging round us. It showed that they expected at any moment a shell or a torpedo. I really had to laugh at these heroes of the sea.

As nobody had yet barred our way we kept on our course at the same speed. Something is bound to happen, said I to myself, for this can hardly be intended as a guard of honour. And something did happen at last. Shortly after seven o'clock the cruiser which we had first sighted came so close that we could easily read her name—*Bluebell.* At the same time she ran up a signal, 'Stop at once.' The other ships kept at a respectful distance, their guns cleared for action. We were prepared for all eventualities. On the forecastle-head the ship's dog was barking as if mad. His instinct told him that he had to play his rôle very carefully now. As soon as I stopped the ship other signals followed: 'What ship is that?' 'Where are you from?' 'Where are you bound for?'

I could not now give Cardiff as my immediate destination, as we had gone too far off the course. So, in order to give a credible answer, I replied 'Genoa and Naples.' For, in case of necessity, we still had on board a number of doors and window-frames bearing this address. I had retained them at the time with a view to building a deck-house in order to alter our appearance if necessary. In hoisting the signal one of my crew intentionally broke the signal halliards. This was a brilliant idea, for every moment's delay might be important. Even if no U-boat came to our help, the darkness which was rapidly falling might

save us. A tramp steamer like the *Aud* could not be expected to have spare signal halliards. In order to convince the English of our willingness, however, we hung out, one after the other, from the bridge the flags that composed the message. In this cumbersome fashion we signalled backwards and forwards for about a quarter of an hour. Then came a long pause, during which the searchlights on the *Bluebell* were used in order to communicate with the other ships. The continual crackling from her aerials proved also that wireless was being used. Other ships had in the meantime come on the scene, and the commander of this flotilla appeared to be on board one of them, for the signals from all the ships were now directed to this particular cruiser. All of a sudden the *Bluebell* signalled to us 'Proceed!'

We were prepared for anything—except that we should be let go scot-free. We did not wait to be told twice, and in a few moments the *Aud* was again under way. In order to conclude the affair in the approved manner, I ordered the first mate to dip our flag slowly and respectfully, which visibly impressed the English, for they returned our salute most courteously. It really appeared as if these English folk were convinced that we actually were the Norwegian *Aud*, as we had stated. All the same, I did not feel too easy in my mind as we steamed away. I could not persuade myself that we had bluffed this lot also, especially as they had not only been warned but actually been sent to intercept us, as was clear from the catechism we had just gone through. When we

had gone some distance I therefore ordered the speed to be gradually increased, so that we should get away as quickly as possible from the enemy.

We did not need to worry very long. We had already put a considerable distance between us. The cruisers had stopped and now lay like a swarm of locusts in one spot, apparently holding a council of war. Eight bells had just been struck, when there was a commotion astern of us. The whole swarm suddenly turned south and came racing after us like a pack of hounds. At the mast of the leading vessel flew the familiar signal, 'Stop at once.' For the second time I stopped the engines and waited events—for unfortunately no other course was open to us. If we had not stopped they would have set about us at once. I waited for perhaps five minutes, and as nothing else happened in that time beyond the fact that the enemy had come considerably nearer, I got a bit impatient and signalled, 'Why?' Instead of answering our signal our old friend the *Bluebell* steamed to within 150 yards of us, stopped, and prepared to lower the cutter. Two officers and about twelve seamen, all armed to the teeth, had taken their places in it. So here was the prize crew at last! A load fell from all our hearts, for there was an excellent prospect that we might escape during the night while Fastnet or Queenstown waited for us in vain. When I shouted down to the deck, 'Look out! Prize crew coming,' the mate grinned all over his face. And others grinned with him, for now, as they said, there was a chance of doing something at last.

During this time the chief engineer was busy forward repairing a steam winch, and in order to see if it was working again he let it run for a moment. It may have been because of this noise, or because the English mistook some empty tin or other floating object for a periscope—at any rate immediately the winch started we heard shouts all round us mingled with the ringing of engine-room telegraphs, and next moment the whole flotilla scattered as if struck by lightning.[1]

Once more we were all alone on the sea. This was a cat-and-mouse game with a vengeance. In order to put an end to the business I now signalled, 'May I proceed?' The answer was 'Wait.' While the cruisers slowly approached again, I signalled, 'Please inform me why.' This time there was a long pause before the reply came. And a very unpleasant reply it was: 'Follow me to Queenstown; course, south, 63° east.'

Curse it—they had got suspicious! Our fate was now decided.

With a prize crew on board, which would have been dealt with according to plan, we might have gained the high seas during the night; but with an escort of armed fast steamers this was out of the question. Even in thick fog and the darkness of night it is very doubtful if we could have broken away from our escort.

1 The English papers stated later, on the authority of authentic (!) reports, that 'the captain of the *Bluebell*, on account of the heavy seas, was unfortunately unable to launch a boat and send a prize crew on board the *Aud*.' I wish to state emphatically, in contradiction, that there was neither wind nor sea at the time.

Now, as in the case of all the other signals, I answered first with, 'Don't understand,' for my only aim now was to gain time and try to get them to put a prize crew on board. In that case an escort would have been unnecessary. The cruiser really made every effort to make his signal intelligible.

But the more trouble he took the less understanding we showed. We seemed to have lost every shred of intelligence on board the *Aud*. In justice to them, I must confess that the crew of the *Bluebell* did their best to help us; they tugged like mad at the signal halliards, and altered course over and over again, in order to let their flags blow out in the wind. But all in vain! Nothing could make us understand what they wanted!

The English did not appear to notice that we were fooling them, for (greatly daring) they came so close to us that the most shortsighted could have read the message. But I only shook my head, held the signal-book aloft, and pointed to it with my finger, to indicate that this signal was not given in our book. Then the *Bluebell* plucked up courage and approached very, very carefully to within fifty yards of us.

While this ridiculous exchange of signals was going on it had gradually become dark, so that it really was difficult now to read the signals. The *Bluebell* noticed this, for we now saw a man with a huge megaphone preparing to shout something to us from the bridge. In order to forestall him, I shouted, 'Shall I let down a ladder for your prize crew?' Instead of answering my question, the *Bluebell* sheered off about

forty yards from us, and her officers showed us by all sorts of pantomime that they had no intention of sending a boat. My very friendly invitation had failed.

If we had only known what a mysterious ship we were supposed to be, the armament and U-boat escort that we were credited with, many things would have been more intelligible to us. As I read to-day the English papers of those days, I come upon the most incredible reports in regard to our little *Aud*. 'The Mystery Ship,' 'The Flying Dutchman,' and other scare headlines followed by the most fantastic accounts prove what excitement the *Aud* caused in England, and, above all, among the vessels of the coast-patrol.

The other cruisers had meanwhile formed a ring round us. On some the guns were manned and ready to fire at us. At the slightest hostile move on our part we should have been riddled like a sieve. Aboard the *Bluebell* a diminutive lieutenant was now enthroned on the signalling bridge, armed with a gigantic megaphone through which he continued to shout, 'Fol-low-me-to-Quee-ee-eenstown.—South—sixty-three—east!' This was repeated time after time, but always with the same negative result.

This farce might have gone on all night, and I was beginning to get tired of it. And the English captain also appeared to be losing patience, for I saw him sign to the speaker to come down. Then we heard a few curt orders. The cruiser passed us on the port side. The next moment there was a flash, and a shell from the *Bluebell's* forward gun burst in front of our bows. As we were directly in his line of fire we were

all stupefied for a moment by the violence of the concussion.

In plain English this meant, 'The farce is finished. Curtain!' As we were not very anxious for any more shells (the next would most certainly go, not across our bow, but into it), I shouted loud enough for the English to hear, 'Full speed ahead, south, 63 east.' At the same time I sent a message to the chief-engineer that I would hang him from the yardarm if this 'full speed' rose above five knots.

We reckoned it out that at this speed we should reach Queenstown at ten o'clock next morning. There was nothing left for us but to follow the cruiser. Further resistance would have been useless. We therefore wallowed along at a 'speed' of five knots behind the *Bluebell*, which now took the lead, while the other ships spread out all round us. A magnificent escort for us twenty-two men! The wind shifted to NNW. and then died down, while the few clouds which were still in the sky disappeared. With them disappeared our last hope of escape.

The *Bluebell*, as was to be expected, was not very pleased with our speed. But all her protests (made by means of a signalling-lamp) did not help a bit. The more his signals flashed the slower we became. The conversation was very funny. For instead of using the electric Morse-lamp we used a small paraffin lamp, making the dots and dashes by holding a hand in front. This was, of course, an extremely cumbersome method, and the ever-increasing rage of the English amused us immensely.

More than a dozen times they signalled 'Faster,' to which I replied at first, 'Don't understand.' Afterwards I answered curtly, 'Impossible.'

'Why?' demanded the *Bluebell*.

'Engines broken down.'

Then a long pause—they were most probably debating how they might compel us to increase our speed. After some time we were informed, 'If you don't get up full speed at once I will make you.' This did not sound very friendly, but I did not worry much, for I said to myself that, after all the anxiety which the enemy had shown to get us to the nearest port, they were not likely to fire at us. The most they would do would be to send a prize crew on board, which was exactly what I wanted. Then, even if the ships remained by us, their watchfulness would be certain to relax. So instead of answering the threat I replied, 'Come and see for yourself.' This was a piece of impudence, but it was just possible it might prove our salvation.

To my chagrin, however, the English showed no desire to accept my invitation. They resigned themselves to their fate, and we had very few more signals from them. Our pace now became a crawl. With the patience of sheep, they steamed along, zigzagging now to the left, now to the right, evidently afraid we might discharge a torpedo at them any moment. The various orders for altering course had all to be repeated about ten times before we pretended to understand, and the *Bluebell* took it all without further protest.

CHAPTER XXI

WE PREPARE TO SINK OUR SHIP

TOWARDS midnight there was a slight distraction. A half-flotilla of destroyers relieved our escort-ships—with the exception of the *Bluebell*, which remained as leader. The other cruisers again turned west. The night was so clear that we could clearly observe every detail in our neighbourhood. Northwards we noticed now and again the lights of passing vessels. If only a submarine would come along now and cut us out! But none came; and as the moon was now beginning to show there could be no doubt that our expedition, which had begun so splendidly, must come to an abrupt termination in a few hours' time.

I therefore ordered the crew on to the bridge and told them with heavy heart that, if unexpected help did not arrive, I should be compelled to blow up the *Aud* next morning, as the ship must, under no circumstances, fall into the hands of the enemy.

They listened to me seriously and in silence. Then they eased their hearts by raining a torrent of curses on the heads of the English, which proved to me that they were no less disappointed than myself at this unhappy ending. All our brave and splendid dreams had come to naught, and we now lay impotent in the claws of our deadly enemies.

During the short time which elapsed before the moon rose, we busied ourselves in doing some important jobs. In the first place we burned everything of a secret nature. The burning of our papers I looked after personally. All valuable materials which could not be burned were carefully dropped overboard. Of course, it was possible, though not probable, that the explosion might not be effective; and to provide for this contingency I had to get rid of everything that might incriminate us. For an instant I entertained the idea of fetching up a couple of machine-guns out of our cargo and mounting them on deck, but gave it up again. It would have been senseless to attack our heavily-armed escort with a machine-gun and risk a battle, especially as my crew were not used to this weapon, which was of the latest army pattern. Each time when we let some dark object down the side into the water the escorting vessels shot away. They must have been horribly afraid of us. The officers of the *Bluebell* told me later on that they thought we were dropping mines! All night through they had been expecting us to suddenly open our gun-ports and rain shells on them. They had estimated my crew at 150. What a pity this was not the case! Who knows what might have been the result!

I now made an inspection of the ship and satisfied myself that all preparations had been made for blowing her up, examined the explosive charges, incendiary bombs and detonators, and then got ready our German naval flags, so that they could be run up in an instant.

If an opportunity offered I intended to ram the *Bluebell* or one of her consorts, and then blow up the ship, so that we should not go down alone. But it looked almost as if the English scented my plan, for they kept at a respectful distance and instantly turned away whenever I altered course even for a moment—a proof that they kept a jolly good look-out.

CHAPTER XXII

THE SINKING OF THE 'LIBAU'

It was long past midnight. The moon was fairly high and it was a beautifully clear and calm night. Under ordinary circumstances one could not have wished for a better. Thousands and thousands of stars twinkled in the sky, and there was not a wisp of cloud to dim their glittering light. The sea was almost as smooth as glass, except when a gentle breeze momentarily ruffled its surface.

The silence of this peaceful night was broken only by an occasional subdued word of command or a whistle on the escorting vessels, which unceasingly circled round us like sheep dogs round their flock. With their sharp bows they tore deep furrows, which, resolving into numberless wavelets, grew ever broader and strewed the surface with millions of glittering silver specks. From time to time one heard also louder orders from the various engine-rooms and stoke-holds, followed by the slamming of furnace-doors and the rattle of shovels. And then, a few moments later, the thick smoke-clouds that issued from the funnels of the dark-gray monsters showed that the enemy was not asleep.

More and more numerous became the lights of

passing ships, which, far to the north of us, were making for their destination safe in the shelter of the coast. And many ships without lights also met us or crossed our course. These were English patrol-ships and destroyers steaming without lights in order to escape the observation of German submarines which had recently been very active round the south coast of Ireland, causing terror and damage to all who had a bad conscience.

On board the *Aud* there was absolute silence. We were all busy with our own thoughts. And these were probably all the same. If luck would only come to our aid just this once! But it did not come. The weather showed no sign of changing before morning. The longed-for submarine, for all our anxious look-out, could not be seen. Whenever we looked towards the English we could see on each ship a couple of dark figures with glasses to their eyes keeping us steadily under observation. Thus we proceeded, mile after mile. Northwards, a long, dark strip, like a low-lying cloud-bank, was now visible; we were approaching the coast. Consequently, it was time we started to learn something about Queenstown Harbour; for if we were forced to sink the *Aud* we ought at least to choose the spot where she would do most damage to the enemy. Unfortunately, when search was made for the proper chart, it turned out that we had special charts of African and American harbours—but none of Queenstown. Naturally, it never occurred to us when we were setting out that we should visit that harbour.

'Oh, damn this Quee-ee-eenstown,' growled the second mate, imitating the voice of the English officer, which was still echoing in our ears. The stout little fellow had not lost his sense of humour in spite of all our misfortunes.

So we were forced to study the details of Queenstown Harbour on a general chart of Ireland. Unfortunately, this chart gave very few details. We discovered, however, that the average depth of the outer entrance to the harbour was twenty to twenty-five fathoms. This suited our purpose admirably. There was enough water to prevent the wreck being raised, and there was still the possibility that we might obstruct the channel if the *Aud* came to rest in the right position.

As dawn approached, the *Bluebell* altered course, keeping closer to the coast, which, with its low chalk-cliffs, covered with rich green meadow, was now plainly visible. 'We can celebrate Easter Sunday there,' I heard a voice behind me say. It was Battermann, of course, the signalman of the grinning countenance. And sure enough it was the 22nd of April, and next day would be Easter Sunday ! In the excitement of the last few days I had lost count of time. At sunrise the destroyers considered their task finished, for after a short exchange of signals with the leading ship they turned and steamed westwards. The warships patrolling these waters were now so numerous that the enemy judged us to be safe. Nevertheless, the *Bluebell* (evidently fearing some stratagem on our part) thought it advisable to leave the head of the convoy and move to the rear, whence she could keep

a better watch on us, nosing round us now on the starboard side, now on the port side, but always at a respectful distance.

During the night I had ordered the crew to put on uniform under their Norwegian costume. Their naval caps they stuffed into their pockets, so that at the given moment they had only to cast off their heavy leather jackets in order to be recognised as German sailors. The first and second mate and myself followed the same procedure. Galley Lighthouse, which stands below the entrance to Queenstown, was now visible. Shortly afterwards the lightship (which at that time lay in mid-channel) came into view. As there was no traffic of any sort in the western half of the channel we surmised—correctly—that a minefield was laid there.

Fifteen minutes more and we should be there. The quays swarmed with war craft of every description. In order to do the job thoroughly I had ordered the condenser to be smashed before the ship was blown up. The engineer had consequently let the pressure fall so low that we were steaming, or rather crawling, not more than two knots, and our escort did not attempt to protest. In view of the proximity of the harbour and of the other warships they probably felt surer of us now. How confident they were, and how unsuspecting, will be seen from the fact that during the last hour they had been busy getting into harbour trim. Guns were polished and covered with tarpaulins, ropes neatly coiled down and decks scrubbed, and many of the crew might be seen in shore-going

clothes, brushing one another down. We could hardly believe our eyes when we noticed their light-hearted carelessness and contrasted it with the deep mistrust they had previously shown.

The moment which was to decide our fate was now at hand. In view of the dangerous cargo which we carried above the explosive bombs, I had to reckon with the fact that when I blew up the ship we might all be blown to bits. I therefore passed the word that I required four volunteers to blow up the ship and hoist the German naval flag, but that the others were free to lower a boat just before the explosion was timed to take place. A unanimous, almost angry, 'No!' was the answer—'we will stay with the captain till the end.' It is a great satisfaction to me to express here to my brave crew my thanks for their fidelity.

Moreover, to ascertain what the *Bluebell* intended with us I now signalled, 'Where are we to anchor?' And shortly afterwards I received the answer, 'Await further orders.' 'All right, then,' said I to myself, 'you will soon see.' And I had the secret satisfaction that up to the very end it was I that called the tune.

When we were about three-quarters of a mile from the lightship a deep scheme occurred to me. On our port side a large English cargo-steamer was tearing along at top speed. She was a ship of about 8000 tons and in ballast, so that she stood high out of the water. We could send her to the bottom along with the *Aud*.

'Port . . . 10 . . . 15.' 'Ease her a little.' 'Steady.' 'Keep her at that!'

Slowly and sluggishly the *Aud* answered her helm. She had barely steerage way.

'All hands to quarters! Ready with the fuses and incendiary bombs! Stand by to run up the ensign!' Every man was at his post ready for the signal.

We were now within 800 yards of the steamer. Then the unexpected happened. Presumably in consequence of a signal from the *Bluebell*, on the bridge of which a signalman was busily semaphoring, the steamer suddenly put her helm hard a-starboard, passing us and the cruiser in a wide sweep. So our plan of ramming her was frustrated. Our luck appeared to be right out. Two hundred yards more to the lightship!—150!—100! Eagerly we scanned the surface for the last time, but no periscope was visible.

There was nothing else for it then.

'All ready?' 'All ready!' was the answer from the engine-room and deck. The hands who were not employed were standing unobtrusively in the neighbourhood of the ship's boats. These they had lowered to the height of the ship's rail, lying on their stomachs so as to avoid being observed by the enemy. It might still be possible to make use of them. From the engine-room came sounds of violent hammering—the condenser was being smashed, and there was no retreating now.

'Hard a-starboard!' The engine-room telegraph rang three times in succession, 'Stop!'

This was the pre-arranged signal. With a last

effort the *Aud* swung slowly to starboard and lay exactly across the channel. The ship's pendant was already waving from the main-mast, and next moment the German naval ensign was run up, bidding defiance to the English and all their works. Jackets and greatcoats flew overboard. Three cheers for our supreme War Lord! Then there was a muffled explosion. The *Aud* shivered from stem to stern, beams and splinters flew up in the air, followed by a cloud of dirty-gray smoke, and flames burst forth from the saloon, the charthouse, the ventilators, and the forecastle. That was all we had time to notice. 'All hands to the boats!' We might be able to get away from the ship before the munitions exploded.

The port side boat, under command of the first mate, had already pushed off, as the starboard boat was just being lowered. 'All away?' 'Ay, ay, sir!' was the answer from the boats. The engineer, the second mate, the helmsman, and I were the last to clamber down. We cut the painter with an axe, and it was high time we did, for within a few feet of our boat was the 'conjurer's box,' which still contained a dozen explosive bombs. The stern was already low in the water, and we were just pushing off when a stoker came running from the burning forecastle with some large object under his arm.

'Good heavens, man, what are you doing on board?'

'I've saved the gramophone,' he shouted, as he swung himself down with the agility of a monkey and plumped into the boat like a sack. But the

gramophone which he had rescued at such risk fell into the water and was no more seen.

It required our utmost efforts to get clear of the sinking ship. While we were busy doing this there was a second violent explosion amidships. Several more followed, accompanied by clouds of thick, sulphurous smoke. The munitions were probably catching fire. If we did not get clear soon the whole ship might blow up round our heads. The crew gave way with a will. Suddenly a gun roared. The *Bluebell* had spoken. We could not see where the shell struck, for the forward part of the *Aud*, which projected out of the water, interrupted our view. All we could see was that the ships at the quay came steaming towards us. At the same moment we heard loud cries coming from our second boat. Surely the *Bluebell* would not——. We hardly dared to give expression to the terrible thought.

As any resistance would only lead to foolish and useless bloodshed (for we were defenceless and at the mercy of an infinitely superior force), I had, as instructed by my superior officers, expressly ordered that a white flag was to be shown immediately if we succeeded in launching the boats.

This order was carried out. The *Bluebell* therefore violated international law if she fired at us now. When, a few minutes later, we rowed round the burning ship, we were glad to find that the second boat was undamaged.

The bow of the *Aud* was lifting higher and higher out of the water. The stern was already submerged,

and the surface of the water was strewn with all sorts of wreckage. Strangely enough, there was no further explosion. The huge charge probably tore such a hole in the ship's side that the water rushed in instantly and drowned out the fuses.

About five minutes after the first explosion a dull, rumbling noise came from the *Aud*. The cargo and bunkers were shifting. The masts tottered, then the blazing bow rose perpendicularly out of the water, and next moment the *Aud*, as if drawn down by an invisible hand, sank with a loud hissing noise. Our good old *Libau* was no more.

CHAPTER XXIII

A SECOND 'BARALONG?'

We had no illusions about the future. Imprisonment was the best we could expect. If the English were disposed to be unmerciful, it would soon be all over with us. While more and more ships were hurrying to the spot where the *Aud* had sunk we rowed slowly towards the *Bluebell*. We could hardly believe our eyes when on approaching the cruiser we saw the reception prepared for us. The crew stood shoulder to shoulder along the ship's side, most of them with rifles at the ready. Every gun and machine-gun on the cruiser was pointed at us, and followed our movements fairly accurately. Were these men devils incarnate? If the position had not been so dreadfully serious one might have been inclined to smile with pity at these men, who were not ashamed to make preparations to shoot down twenty-two German sailors like dogs. Or were they afraid that we, with our two miserable lifeboats, were trying to ram and sink their great cruiser? I almost had that impression.

In order to make myself known, I stood up and waved my hand. It might perhaps prevent a volley being fired next moment. As this evoked no reply, I shouted at the top of my voice in English that we

were men of the German navy, and that we claimed the protection of our white flag. In a few moments the answer came from the cruiser: 'The captain only is to come on board.' So we rowed alongside.

For the first time we now saw the enemy at close range. The impression they made on us was anything but favourable. Unlike the crews of ships of the line, such as I have seen before and since, they presented a most unkempt appearance. Only a part of the crew wore uniform. The other seamen and stokers, with their coloured shirts, unwashed, and unshaved, might just as well have belonged to the crew of a small collier. One of the officers, apparently the ship's surgeon, was actually wearing brown civilian trousers and a black uniform jacket. The arms they carried were still stranger than their clothing. Those who had no rifles were provided with all sorts of lethal weapons. Sabres, knives, pistols, and even cutlasses, with huge basket-handles, dating from the earliest days of the English Navy, formed part of the motley armament. The whole scene, the threatening language, and not least the villainous faces of some of the crew, caused me much foreboding. While I was getting out of the boat the officers followed with their pistols every move I made, and I had a feeling that any moment I might receive a bullet in the back. My crew assured me afterwards that while I was going up the ship's side they had the same feeling. And they had plenty of justification for the feeling, for the *Baralong* case was not by any means the only blot in the history of English naval warfare to account

for the general contempt and mistrust with which the English were regarded in Germany.

At the gangway a small, boyish-looking lieutenant received me. He signed to me to go aft, and, under the impression that the captain wished to speak to me there, I did so. At the same time my boat was ordered to row to a distance of fifty yards from the *Bluebell*. The crew formed a semicircle round me, and the lieutenant took care that they kept a proper distance from me. Then, upon his order, six men with rifles stepped forward and formed a close guard round me. Strangely enough, all the officers had suddenly disappeared from the deck. Shortly afterwards I accidentally noticed the surgeon peeping at me from behind a searchlight on the upper deck. An indefinite suspicion crossed my mind. Surely it was not possible that the English would show such contempt for the laws of war. I still refused to believe it. The next few moments proved to me that I was right.

The lieutenant gave some order in a subdued voice that trembled a little. The six men, standing in a semicircle before me, brought their rifles to the ready. Behind them the rest of the crew continued to pour on me, as before, a torrent of threats and insults of the most vulgar description, while no one made the slightest move to stop them. 'Shoot him, the German swine!' 'Knock him down, the dog! He is not worth wasting powder on!' And these were not by any means the worst expressions which these scallywags used. There could be no doubt it was now

a question of life and death. I was to be shot down without any sort of trial, and then it would be the turn of my brave crew. I therefore requested the lieutenant in a respectful but decided tone to conduct me to his commanding officer before he took any further steps. For answer there was a derisive laugh from the crew and more abuse of the lowest sort. The lieutenant said something to his men which I did not catch, whereupon some of them put their rifles to their shoulders. The others kept handling the breach and trigger. It seemed as if the crew would wait no longer for the horrible drama, and they began to whistle and tramp. 'Fetch the other piratical dogs also,' they continued to shout.

My men in the two boats, who had been watching these proceedings from a short distance, began to get restless and made as if to come on board. I signed to them to do nothing precipitate. Then I summoned up my whole English vocabulary and again asked the officer in the most energetic manner to conduct me to his commanding officer, pointing out at the same time that we were legitimate combatants, and demanded that, in accordance with international law, we should be treated as such.

The lieutenant stood before me undecided, looking first to me and then round to his men, as if seeking advice. Then an idea which suddenly occurred to me proved our salvation. In a voice that could be heard on the bridge of the *Bluebell* I shouted, 'If, instead of treating us as regular prisoners of war, you want to engineer another *Baralong* affair, inform your

commanding officer at once that for each one of us that you unlawfully shoot the German Government will have two English officers shot. If you think that you can answer before God and your conscience for the murder which you intend, then do what you have to do. I have nothing more to say to you.'

This apparently made some impression on the English, for all the shouting stopped at once and the lieutenant after some delay told his men to order arms. At the same time he sent a man forward with a message. About ten minutes afterwards the man came back and whispered something in the officer's ear. The lieutenant then called my two boats alongside and ordered the crew to come on board. We were then thoroughly searched, and the English had the bitter disappointment of finding neither arms nor secret papers on us. When one of my men was asked if he still had any weapons he answered with a loud 'Yes!' Asked where they were, he pointed with a mysterious air to his big sea-boots. Carefully the English felt down his legs, while two men held the unfortunate fellow fast by the arms. He was, without doubt, a very dangerous man. We followed the proceedings very attentively—and what do you think the English fished out? An enormous German sausage which good old Bruhns had intended to take into captivity with him as an 'emergency ration.' With angry blows they pushed him away.

Then we were taken below. I was separated from my men. The other officers now reappeared, and the

little lieutenant assured me again and again in a somewhat apologetic tone that he had just now 'only carried out his orders.' The engines of the *Bluebell* started—we were apparently entering the inner harbour. Half an hour later a launch took us with a tremendous escort to the cruiser *Adventure,* the flagship of the squadron based in Queenstown. Officers and crew were on deck watching us. Our reception was extremely cool.

I took the opportunity of again warning my men to give nothing away either in conversation or examination, and above all not to get drunk. They were taken forward, while I and the first and second mate were taken to a lock-up in the after-battery, where we were closely guarded.

The food was good, and our treatment at the hands of individual officers was extremely courteous. The captain and the first-officer especially showed us every consideration possible under the circumstances. I need, of course, hardly mention that this consideration was not due exclusively to sympathy for us; for the English were extremely anxious to learn what details they could from us. At the same time I am convinced that they honestly meant what they said in describing our expedition as 'very smart.'

In the afternoon a steamer took us to Spike Island, which lies in the middle of the harbour. From various conversations and from the continuous rushing to and fro of orderlies we gathered that something serious was on foot. We were taken off the cruiser because it was feared the Irish might help us to escape.

Had the revolution broken out already? Where on earth was Roger Casement then?

Our escorts were getting larger and larger. Eight officers and nearly a whole company took our little party to the fort. On the way thither we received several shouts of encouragement from the Irish population, which made me hope that we might still be rescued. This was probably also the explanation of the strong escort. Arrived at the fort we were put in separate rooms, which were heavily barred, and double sentries were posted at the doors. The view from the windows was barred by several high walls. A man disguised as a clergyman visited us in our cells which, with the exception of roughly-made tables and iron bedsteads, contained no furniture. I had a feeling that our execution was to take place inside these walls, and that the clergyman had come to prepare us for our end.

But my anxiety turned out to be unfounded. The man, who had probably never been a clergyman, soon betrayed by his clumsy questions that he wanted to examine us. When he informed me finally, 'in confidence,' that he was 'an enthusiastic Irishman,' I knew enough. Fortunately, our sojourn in the fort did not last long. Two hours later we were again taken on board the cruiser. It seemed to me as if the English authorities in their excitement could not decide on the safest place for us. We remained two whole days on board the cruiser.

During this time I had an opportunity of noting the enormous difference between this ship and the

Bluebell. Discipline, order, and cleanliness were simply perfect on the *Adventure.* The officers and men with whom I came in contact were strictly official, but courteous. I mention this fact specially because the English officers and men whom I happened to meet both before and after this, with a few exceptions, who were aware of the duties of their position, showed to a defenceless prisoner of war tactlessness and offensiveness almost without parallel.

During this time the news filtered through that the Irish revolution was in full swing. From a newspaper, which I succeeded in obtaining in spite of my guards, I learned that Roger Casement had been caught. Unfortunately, no details were given.

I certainly found another official report, which appeared to have been intentionally falsified, to the effect that a disguised German auxiliary cruiser, which had tried to land arms and munitions for the Irish rebels, had sunk in Queenstown Harbour, and that Roger Casement was a member of the crew! This latter statement was a lie; but the other statement showed only too clearly that the English knew all about the business. Our position had therefore become very critical.

Time after time I was invited to a 'glass of whisky' —in other words, an examination—by the first officer. The whole staff of the ship was assembled there. To the great disgust of the English, I refused the whisky with thanks, and drank coffee instead till further orders—a drink that did not appeal to these gentlemen. In answer to their numerous questions

I told them the fibs which our position necessitated. Among other things I told them we had arms and munitions on board for our troops in Africa, and heavy guns which, after breaking through the blockade, we intended to mount in order to start commerce-raiding. A remark which was dropped in the course of these conversations confirmed my conjecture that the reason why the crew of the *Bluebell* were so angry was that our action in sinking the *Aud* had deprived them of the prize money which they would have earned by bringing her safely into port.

Late next day the *Adventure* weighed anchor. I now occupied the first officer's cabin, which he had very kindly placed at my disposal. A sentry came in and screwed down the dead light of the scuttle, so that I could no longer see out. So we were passing the spot where the *Aud* sank.

Manœuvring from side to side for what appeared to me to be an eternity, and keeping close in to the lightship (as I was able to see through a crack) the cruiser gained the open sea. Numerous craft were busy round the spot where the *Aud* sank. Apparently, then, I must have sunk her at a useful spot, for if a small vessel like the *Adventure* had so much trouble in passing, how would it fare with really big ships?

If I am not mistaken divers were also busy. They were welcome to all they could find, for the water where the *Aud* lay was too deep even for divers. For this reason I also thought it would be impossible to salve the ship, especially as the strong under-currents would soon bury her in sand.

CHAPTER XXIV

LAWFUL COMBATANT OR PIRATE?

About 5 a.m. I was taken on deck. We were now at Milford Haven, on the south-west coast of England. A strong escort of Marines, which had been sent in all haste from Chatham, came to fetch us. A long, unpleasant journey by special train then followed. Our food during the eighteen hours' journey consisted of two slices of bread with a suggestion of butter. I could not discover where we were going. At various stations the people came to the carriage windows and shouted and spat at us, and the officer in charge of the escort angrily drew the curtains. The soldiers escorting us filled the passages of our two corridor carriages, and when asked where we were going I heard them repeatedly answer, 'To London. They are to be shot in the Tower!' This did not sound very hopeful.

After midnight on a pitch-dark night we arrived in Chatham. We could see nothing. All the lights were masked in consequence of a recent Zeppelin raid. Nothing could be heard but the rattle of rifles and bayonets. Now and then the silence was broken by a muffled word of command. We were then surrounded by a squad of Marines and marched through

the dark streets to the barracks. We halted before a large building. My crew had been taken off in another direction, only the first and second mates remaining with me. We were taken up two flights of stairs.

All the proceedings had taken place in uncanny silence. Several cells were opened. The middle one was mine. I had hardly crossed the threshold when the door was again barred, and a heavy key turned in the lock. I was left to myself.

Early next morning I received a visit from an Admiral and his A.D.C. As a well-bred man and as the junior in rank, I saluted in curt military fashion. But this gentleman did not consider it necessary to return my salute, not even with his stick, as is the custom of most English officers. I therefore answered his questions so curtly and evasively that he soon left.

This day and the succeeding ones dragged heavily. I tried to while away the time with physical exercises, but as I could not go on for ever with these I was left most of the day to my reflections. Next night I chanced to overhear a conversation between two of my guards, who were standing directly opposite the peep-hole in my cell-door. They were speaking of an attack on Lowestoft by the German Fleet. To my joy, I gathered from their conversation that the English had suffered heavily.

Twenty times during the night a sentry came into my cell, in order to make sure that I had not hanged myself, and went out again with a loud rattle of keys. When I entered the cell my first thought was, 'How

am I to get out of this?' But I was soon convinced that there was not the slightest possibility of escape. I had not even that most necessary of all tools, a knife. At meals (which were good and abundant) I was given only a spoon.

The most unpleasant feature of this captivity was that I had too much time to think about our ultimate fate. I had no idea what was happening outside, or what was to happen to my men and myself. I had discovered that the room on my right was occupied by the officer of the guard, and that on my left by the sergeant of the guard. Farther on, on each side, were the cells of the first and second mates. It was therefore impossible to communicate with them by tapping on the wall.

Next morning when I got up all my clothes had vanished, uniform, linen, shoes—in fact, everything I had taken off. I was just about to knock and ask the explanation when an English petty-officer appeared and explained to me that my things were still in the tailor's and shoemaker's shops, and that they were being sewn together again. He told me they had taken everything apart during the night and had discovered a large quantity of English, Norwegian, and Danish banknotes in our clothes. It would count against me that I had sewn my money in the lining. They had unfortunately found no secret documents, he added regretfully. This put all possibility of bribing our guards out of the question. It was what you might call very hard luck. As soon as I was dressed I was taken downstairs. The escort was

already waiting to take us to the railway station. On the way to the station we were joined by my crew with another escort. I was glad to see that they were in good spirits. They had no idea yet what was on foot.

The Chatham mob behaved so badly to us that the escort were repeatedly forced to interfere. We went by train to London, and were taken from the station in two open motor-lorries. The whole business reminded me of cattle being taken to the slaughter-house. A halt was made at Scotland Yard, the head-quarters of the English Police, where we were to be examined. A big crowd received us with abuse and threatening language.

As was to be expected, our reception at Scotland Yard was icily cold and unfriendly. I was at once taken before the high officials of the Admiralty. Three sides of the big room were occupied by naval officers, General Staff officers, police officials, and detectives. The Commissioner of Police for London was also present. Commander Brandon and his colleague Captain French,[1] who, some time ago, spent several years in a German prison after being convicted of espionage, acted as interpreters and members of this court. As Captain French translated not only badly but also intentionally wrong, I refused his mediation and henceforward spoke in English.

Each of us was examined separately. Of course, we 'fooled them to the top of their bent.' They tried

[1] *sic.*—Translator.

by every possible means to pump us by kindliness and by threats of the meanest description.

My men naturally told them the same fairy-tales as I. Even comic interludes were not lacking. For instance, one of the crew when asked where the German Fleet was, answered, after some reflection, 'Yes, I can tell you exactly. It has been at sea for a long time looking for the English Fleet, but so far has not been able to find it.' The English did not take the remark very kindly, for which we could hardly blame them.

Right at the beginning of the examination I expressly told the President of the Tribunal, a naval captain, that he need not expect a single word from me or my men which would prejudice German interests. As he continued, in spite of this, to ply us with questions, he need not have been surprised if we answered falsely.

Unfortunately, it became quite clear in the course of the examination that the English not only had got wind of the arrival of the *Libau*, but also possessed exact information on practically every detail. Their information on the preparations for the expedition were particularly accurate.

There were traitors and spies at work! I cudgelled my brains in vain to think where they had got their information. From what the English told me of my sojourn in the different German ports and in Berlin, I concluded that a male or female spy was following every step I took at that time. It was a complete mystery to me. In answer to repeated questions about

Sir Roger Casement, I answered each time that I did not know the man at all, whereupon they read out to me out of a big file some passages which were word for word identical with my secret orders! I had, personally, burned my copy of the orders. They must, therefore, possess the only extant copy, Casement's!

Should I continue to deny all knowledge?—I reflected for a moment. Yes, in the interests of my men I must; for I judged by the conduct of the English that they intended to treat my crew and myself in the same illegal manner.

That Casement was a prisoner I already knew, but I did not know where he was imprisoned. The English captain told me—probably as a bluff—that Casement was a prisoner in the next room, and that I should be confronted with him in a few minutes. There was no further object, he said, in my denying knowledge of the business as Casement, in order to save his neck, had betrayed everything! I had to pull myself together in order to conceal the effect on me of this statement. Luckily I kept my head. Bluff against bluff! Only the utmost assurance could help me now. So I answered in a quiet tone that I should be glad to be confronted with him at once, so that the officers could see for themselves that we were strangers.

It was a risky game I was playing. If Casement had really betrayed everything we were lost. If not, my effrontery might perhaps save the situation. The English, taken aback, looked at one another for a moment; and then all turned their eyes on me; they wished to note what effect Casement's name had on

me. A long, uncomfortable pause followed, during which I made every effort to preserve an attitude of indifference. At last the examination came to an end. And—nothing more, either then or later, was heard about confronting me with Casement! The manner in which the English conducted the inquiry provoked me several times to declare that they should not forget they were dealing with a German officer and German sailors. I had told them that I had sealed orders which were not to be opened till we had left German waters, so that my crew knew nothing about our objective when they followed me. The English captain was intensely angry with me for having carried out these orders. I ought, he said, as soon as I had read them, to have turned back at once and refused to carry out such a commission! The only way I could answer such a disgraceful suggestion was with a contemptuous shrug and with the remark that such a thing might be possible in England, but not in Germany, where every soldier at once carries out every order of his superior officers without moving an eyelid.

After this interrogation I was taken to an adjoining room, carefully guarded by several detectives. The English had not been able to prove that secret intercourse had taken place between us and the Irish in Tralee. They may therefore have come to the conclusion that they could not, as they had threatened, shoot or hang us without a gross violation of international law. They therefore looked round for some other excuse to vent their anger on me and catch me.

They soon found one, and when I was again brought in the English captain explained to me that I must be shot because I had blown up my ship after I had been taken prisoner!

This, of course, was nonsense. When I followed the English cruiser to Queenstown I was by no means a prisoner; I was simply a neutral obeying their command because no other course was open to me.

Nevertheless, the English captain continued to point out that they were not violating international law, but that we ourselves had violated international law by misuse of a neutral flag. We could not, therefore, claim to be treated as lawful combatants, and must expect the treatment always meted out to pirates, hanging or shooting. As before, when on board the *Bluebell*, I tried the effect of the threat that the German Government would make reprisals. Then the inquiry ended. Before I was led away, however, the captain informed me that he could no longer regard me as an officer, as I had not told him the truth! These English really had a very naïve conception of a German officer's honour and sense of duty.

When I arrived in Chatham I soon found that the English captain had not spoken empty words. The treatment which I now received left much to be desired. Of the much-vaunted chivalrousness of the English towards their captive enemies I saw no trace.

For several days we remained in this solitary confinement without knowing what our fate was to be. None of us will ever forget these days of anxious

uncertainty. I was examined several times in my cell also. From the ever-increasing strictness of the guards, their constant whispering, the sidelong looks they gave me when they thought they were observed, I concluded that we were in a very serious position.

On four successive nights Zeppelin attacks were made on London, and Chatham also got its share. The excitement of the English, when it was announced, 'The Zepps are coming,' can hardly be described. My nerves had gradually become so dulled that I hardly took any notice of the attacks.

After long, anxious days we were released from this nerve-racking confinement. I had already given up all hope. An escort came early one morning for us and took us first to London and then to an officer prisoner-of-war camp. I learned that the rest of the crew had been moved the day before. When, after a long railway journey, we arrived at Castle Donington, near Derby, we at last discovered that we were being taken to Donington Hall Camp. So they had realised that they could prove no charge against us. All the same, I was not convinced of this until I saw German uniforms moving about in the distance inside the camp. Until that moment I had been ready for any new, unpleasant surprise; for this time the escort, contrary to previous custom, had been provided with handcuffs.

The road to the camp took a good half-hour, and then the great gates closed behind us with a loud bang. A large number of English officers and Tommies took us into their keeping as 'very dangerous criminals.'

Shortly after my arrival at Donington Hall the court-martial on Roger Casement began, lasting for several months and ending with his condemnation. During this time the voyage of the *Aud* was the subject of constant inquiries on the part of the Government and the Press.

As I learned, partly through the inquiry proceedings, and afterwards from the commander of the U-boat, Sir Roger Casement had reached Tralee Bay late on the evening of our arrival. The U-boat had seen from a distance in the dark the outline of the *Aud* at Innistooskert, but mistook it for an English destroyer. Thereupon Casement, despairing of the arrival of the *Aud*, went ashore in a collapsible boat and was arrested next morning by the English who were waiting for him. His arrest had caused so much excitement among the Irish that no one dared to get into communication with us. But Casement's arrest caused the outbreak of the Irish revolution. As, however, the Irish lacked the most necessary things, rifles and heavy artillery, the revolution, bloody and serious as it was, could only fail. Sir Roger Casement was sentenced to be hanged. On the 3rd of August the sentence was carried out. The brilliant defence which Casement made had been of no avail. He died every inch a man, and with the consciousness that the idea for which he had fought and suffered would sink deeper in the hearts of the Irish and bring them nearer to freedom.

CHAPTER XXV

UNSUCCESSFUL ATTEMPTS AT ESCAPE

DURING the long period of captivity which ensued all my faculties were concentrated on finding an opportunity to escape as quickly as possible from this unbearable camp.

The proceedings against Roger Casement, which began in April, showed clearly that the English would stick at nothing in their effort to find out those details in the preparations for the Irish revolution which, with all their extensive spy system, they had so far failed to discover. Sergeant Bailey, on whose fidelity Casement relied so thoroughly, had turned traitor in order to save his life.

In international law the English could make no charge against me or my crew. I knew that well. But I also knew just as well that international law would afford us no protection if it occurred to the English to do what *they* thought right. It would not have been the first time in this war that the English had ignored the most elemental provisions of international law; for it is well known that the English, when it is necessary, know only one law, English law. So long, therefore, as the proceedings against Casement lasted, I had to be prepared for any new

surprise. But I did not wish to wait for this, for I had not the slightest wish to share Casement's probable fate and gratify the thirst for vengeance of the English mob by hanging on a gallows in the Tower.

Whenever I got a chance I surveyed the camp as unobtrusively as possible, climbed into the most distant lofts and cellars of the old ruined castle, and examined the great barbed-wire fence to find the weakest spot. In doing so I discovered that it would be, at the very least, extremely difficult to escape from this prison. Donington Hall was at that time the best-guarded and most secure prisoner-of-war camp in England. It deserved the name 'Castle' only when regarded from a distance, for the interior of Donington Hall was more like a tenement than the former residence of the Barons Hastings.

Since the escape of Lieut.-Commander Plüschow in July 1915, no prisoner of war had succeeded in getting away, although well organised attempts had not been wanting. The difficulties were increased by the fact that the possibility of further progress after leaving the camp had got much smaller during the last six months. The patrolling of the country and the watch kept on the main roads, railway stations, and docks, were now such that it was practically impossible to get out of the country. The exemption-certificates and the food-cards, without which one could get nothing to eat on the road, increased the difficulties of escape.

If I therefore attempted to discuss the question with my friends I always got the same answer: 'It's

no use. You will get outside the barbed wire and no farther.' I could sympathise with the poor fellows' hopelessness. The many recent failures and the effect of the long captivity—most of them had been pining here for a year and a half—had impaired their will and brought them into a state of dull despondency.

I had not yet been infected with barbed-wire fever, and persevered in my efforts. The hope of getting free sooner or later from this prison, was the only thing which could save one from a mental breakdown.

Unfortunately, I was soon convinced that escape before the Casement trial was finished was out of the question. I had, indeed, found a few friends who were willing to make along with me their *n*th attempt at escape, and there were always a few stout fellows willing to help. But we had so many difficulties to contend with that week after week and month after month went by and we were no nearer the realisation of our hopes.

The greatest difficulty was this, that it was possible only with the greatest cunning and by bribing with large sums of English money to obtain the necessary tools. In contrast to all other English camps in which N.C.O.'s and men and civilians were interned—and in contrast to many officer camps in Germany also—tools of any sort were forbidden in English officer camps, even the tiniest hammer. Even pocket-knives which were larger than the index-finger were confiscated, and the owner was punished into the bargain. Ready money—again in contrast to other camps—was

forbidden. In order to be able to pay for the necessaries of life we received metal tokens for which we gave receipts. This regulation and many others, made either by the War Office or the Camp Commandant, made the execution of our plans very difficult. At the same time these regulations were very flattering to us German officers, for they showed us continually how important we were. It was characteristic of the English attitude that much more extensive measures were taken to recapture one escaped German officer than were taken to recapture ten or twenty men. Every 'Hun officer' was looked upon as the devil himself. The best proof of this is to be found in the English press.

The second difficulty was to procure civilian clothes and false papers. This also was possible only by bribing English soldiers or labourers who happened to be working in the camp. I succeeded on one occasion in appropriating unnoticed a torn jacket and a small chisel belonging to a workman who was laying drain-pipes near my hut. I left in place of them a couple of silver coins, and then from the shelter of a shrub I saw the Englishman pick them up contentedly without bothering about the stolen articles—which I had safely buried in the meantime.

The excitement which my landing in Tralee Bay and the subsequent events in Ireland had caused throughout England, and, above all, the senseless clamour which the English press kept up for months afterwards, brought it about that I was regarded as a sort of 'Sherlock Holmes,' and was watched very closely

in the camp. The sentries were told to keep a sharp eye on me, and as I was conspicuous on account of my height, all eyes were turned on me as soon as I appeared anywhere in the camp. Particularly during the first months of my captivity I often heard the sentries say, when I came near the barbed wire, 'Look out! Lieutenant Spindler is coming!' Sometimes they called me simply, 'the Casement fellow,' or 'the Casement captain.' Whenever English generals came down to inspect and were present at the parade, the Camp Commandant, before walking down the front, always pointed with his stick to the right flank where I stood, and told his superior officers, 'That tall naval officer is the fellow that brought Roger Casement to Ireland.' We gradually became so accustomed to this that the strange introduction seemed a necessary part of the parade. But apart from the fact that the Englishman's statement was false, this exhibition at last began to bore me. I therefore sent a request to the colonel to omit this introduction—which he did, when I pointed out that I did not wish to be regarded as a very fine specimen in a zoological garden.

With similar intermezzos, chief among which were my numerous written complaints, the days passed. From years of experience I knew that the utmost impudence was the only thing that impressed the English. The manner in which some of the English officers treated us prisoners enraged me so much that I gradually made a sort of hobby of plaguing the camp authorities with innumerable written complaints.

For many of my friends also who did not know English I composed similar letters; and I nearly always had the satisfaction of noting their success, for the complaints were always justified.

The death sentence on Casement had already been carried out. Fortunately, the proceedings had revealed no material that could compromise me. Some of us had in the meantime succeeded in manufacturing (by means of an imprint in wax) a copy of the key to the so-called clock-tower. Under this, as we had been told by a clerk who had been sacked by the commandant, was a passage nearly a mile long. This led apparently to the village of Castle Donington and was probably intended by the Barons Hastings as a means of escape in case of siege.

I need hardly mention that we made the utmost efforts to find the entrance to this passage. Unfortunately, we could work only a very short time each day in the cellar of the clock-tower, for close to the stairs which led to it was the switchboard for the alarm siren and for the electric-light which was used both day and night. Nevertheless, with the help of a large pocket-knife we succeeded after about a fortnight's hard work in cutting a brick out of the wall undamaged. Once this beginning had been made the work of cutting out more bricks went quicker. Then we burrowed farther with the little chisel I had appropriated. The rubble thus produced was wrapped up in newspapers and carried away afterwards. A few officers, of course, always kept 'Cave' above, and whenever the signal agreed upon

was given, the bricks were quickly replaced, and then no one could see from the stairs that anything had been going on here. Twice we were surprised. In our extremity all we could do was to flatten ourselves against the wall, and the sergeant who had been to the switchboard went away without noticing anything.

After several weeks' work we had cut a hole about a yard and a half deep in the wall. It looked as if we should never get through. To our joy we noticed however, that the wall, when tapped with the chisel, gave a much more hollow sound now. Did this mean that we were near the underground passage? With throbbing hearts we worked on. In three or four days we reckoned we ought to be through. Then the unexpected happened. Next morning, before we went down to the cellar, we noticed to our horror a couple of locksmiths, under the personal direction of the commandant, putting a lock and also a heavy padlock on the little tower door. Our plan was discovered. How, I have never been able to find out. All I know is that the English, in their zeal, made a stupid mistake, for if they had waited until the afternoon they would have caught us going down.

That disposed of the tunnel once and for all, for the only way of getting into the clock-tower was through the little tower door. For the next few weeks we dared do nothing, on account of the very strict watch which was kept. But as no one escaped during the next month the watchfulness of the guards gradually relaxed again; so we started on a new enterprise which promised success. Through the castle chapel,

which was about twenty yards distant from the scene of our former labours there must surely be some way of getting to the tower. No sooner said than done. After the evening round, I and a friend got out of bed. At the head of our beds we put dark bundles, which in the bad light might be mistaken for our heads. Then we carefully felt our way along staircases and passages down to the chapel. Under a seat on one side of the altar we carefully loosened one of the broad floor-boards, and climbed down through the opening. At first we thought we could not find bottom, for I, the taller of the two, though hanging on to the plank only by my finger-tips, could feel nothing with my toes. We boldly struck a match, and then found that we were right over a shaft. So we tried our luck at another spot, and at last succeeded. The depth under the front portion of the chapel was so small that it was only by bending low that we could stand in it. With the help of matches we felt our way forward between the old stone coffins of the long-dead Barons Hastings. A heavy, mouldy smell, which constantly made us cough, pervaded the crypt. Occasionally it became so strong that we debated whether we should retreat, for the echo of our coughing resounded from all the walls and we feared that the night-patrol might discover us. It was so uncannily still that we could hear the ticking of our watches. Now and then something raced noiselessly over our feet in the dark. Rats were apparently plentiful here. Involuntarily I thought of a story which I had read as a child. Two rascals who in the dead of night had

broken into the cellar of an old castle suddenly found themselves surrounded by coffins, from which the spirits of the departed rose just as the pair were about to steal the hoard of gold. They froze with fear, and were found next morning dead in the cellar. Although I don't believe in ghosts, I must confess that for a moment I felt uncomfortable. Inch by inch we advanced. The farther we went the more icy became the temperature. At last we arrived at a massive stone wall. We felt and examined the moist stones and the crumbling mortar in between. Nothing but basalt-blocks three feet square. Who could tell but that one of these stones covered the entrance to the tunnel? Surely we should be able to find the entrance.

We found nothing remarkable that night and made our way back to bed again, intending to renew our search next night. Night after night we repeated these excursions, and were once within a hair's breadth of being discovered. The 'Visiting Rounds' lit up the chapel inside just as we were about to cover up the opening with the plank. There we stood as stiff as mummies, with our faces turned to the entrance, carrying the whole weight of the heavy oak seat on our heads, for in our hurry we had not had time to replace it in its old position.

One of the soldiers actually turned the light on our faces for several seconds. Then the heavy door was slammed and next moment we heard the 'Tommies' continue their rounds. Once again luck had been on our side. Probably the men had just turned out of their bunks and were really half asleep as they stumbled

through the camp. By the time they got to our beds we were under the clothes, and we snored loudly when the same lamp was held to our faces which had almost betrayed us a few minutes earlier.

After about a fortnight's work we were unwillingly forced to the conclusion that our hopes had been unfounded. There was not the slightest indication that this massive wall contained an entrance to a tunnel. Several determined attempts to loose one of the big stones had to be given up as hopeless for want of necessary tools.

In any case we should have had to desist, for a few days later one of our comrades, Naval-Lieutenant Prondczindsky, was caught while attempting to escape, and the guards again became very strict. It was a pity that Prondczindsky's plan did not succeed.[1] He tried to cross the barbed-wire entanglement, which was eight or nine yards deep, by means of a board which he had made.

He had spent nearly five months putting together a sort of box-like structure about seven yards long, eight inches wide, and four inches deep, made from the wood of cigar-boxes. Big pieces of timber were unobtainable in the camp, and he had calculated with mathematical precision the carrying capacity of his plank.

To increase our difficulties, the guard was now

[1] It only earned him six months' imprisonment. Let me state here that, instead of the three to fourteen days' arrest awarded in Germany for attempts at escape, the English, up to the conclusion of the Hague Agreement in July, 1917, never awarded less than six months' imprisonment!

increased by twenty men in consequence of this attempt. As the winter was coming on our chances became still smaller, for now there was nothing in the fields to satisfy one's hunger in case of necessity. The daily camp rations were getting visibly smaller in consequence of the activity of the submarine war, so that it was difficult now to save up even a week's food. Even bribery helped us little, for it often happened that English soldiers, with whom we were for certain reasons on good terms, came to us, who had so little, and begged a piece of bread because their own rations had become so short.

I gave up one plan after another, but took pains all the time to give the impression that escape was the last thing I thought about. I was a regular attendant at the hospital, sometimes with justification, sometimes without. I wished to give the doctor the impression that in my impaired state of health it would be impossible for me to support the fatigues of an escape. My knowledge of English stood me in good stead in intercourse with the English officers and men who were now getting more and more trustful. If they chanced to ask me whether I ever thought of escaping I told them with a most innocent look that only a fool would think of making an attempt now that the conditions had become so difficult.

I had gradually worked out a code system by which I communicated with Germany in a round-about manner. This system of communicating secret news was so well conceived that the most alert English censor would have found nothing suspicious in the

contents of my letters. Even if he did suspect something, all his arts and appliances, magnifying glasses, acid-baths, photographing, and ironing of the letters, would not help him a bit. The letters revealed nothing. To make assurance doubly sure, I had my letters in code signed by comrades who were not regarded by the English as suspicious; for I had reason to believe that all my letters were stopped. In this manner I succeeded in communicating with friends in Germany, asking them for things necessary for the escape, English money, tools (the parts of which were sent separately), and so forth. The letters, which arrived safely at their destination, were understood and the various commissions executed. For obvious reasons I do not intend to disclose how the articles were sent. Unfortunately, very few of them reached me, for when they began to arrive at the camp I had already escaped.

I had read in the newspaper that some of my brave crew had escaped from their camp and been recaptured. As I learned later, they had conceived the plan (a hopeless one) of setting me free and then trying to get out of the country. Shortly afterwards I was taken to London to appear before the Prize Court. I got such short notice that I had no time to provide myself with civilian clothes with the object of escaping during the long journey or when we were in London. Without money and in uniform I could not make the attempt. Immediately after my return to camp I addressed a long letter to the Prize Court, in which I requested that the previous decision should be

revised, and that the money taken from me and my crew should be restored to us.

The Swiss Embassy was kind enough to forward this letter (and many others) to the proper quarter, although the American Embassy, which was still 'neutral' at that time, had refused to transmit it. In the next chapter I shall have something to say about the effect of these letters.

It would, of course, have been a mistake to concentrate on any one plan which did not absolutely guarantee success. I therefore looked round for other methods of escaping from the camp. With the help of a friend I contrived a jumping pole (made of broom-handles) with which I intended to jump over the barbed-wire fence. Unfortunately, the pole broke in two on its first 'trial voyage.' We were not discouraged, and we made another pole. And when this broke we made more. But all these attempts failed because it was impossible to smuggle a couple of good-sized poles into the camp. To the same fact, also, was due the failure of another scheme to reach a tree outside the fence from one inside by means of a long pole. This would have required a piece of wood or rope at least twelve yards long, for all the lower boughs, especially those near the fence, had been carefully cut off.

About the time when I was busy with these plans a small motor-car used to come nearly every day into camp. With a little address and the help of the chauffeur it would have been possible to hide in it, for it was easy to distract the attention of the sentry

told off to guard it. The chauffeur was, as I soon discovered, very accessible. I covenanted with him to take me out of the camp for £500.

From my own resources and by borrowing from friends who had large sums of English money, I could raise about half of this amount. The remainder was to be paid after the war, and satisfactory guarantees were given. The payment was to be made by one of my friends as soon as the man proved that I was safely out of the camp. The day and the hour were agreed upon, and everything appeared to be in order. Very few knew about my plan, for I did not want to have it wrecked by incautious gossip.

On the appointed evening I stood in the yard near the garage, provided with all necessaries, and waited with bated breath for my deliverer. Half an hour—an hour—passed. I was beginning to wonder if I had been deceived, when suddenly I heard the well-known sound of the horn in the distance. A few moments later the headlights lit up the long passage that led to the yard. As the car passed the entrance doors I noticed two English officers sitting in it. Had the chauffeur led me into a trap?

I carefully crept along the wall into the darkest corner of the garage. 'Well, now, let's get to work,' I heard one of the officers say. Then I saw him look round the shed as if looking for something. My heart beat faster. Fortunately, the Englishman's remark had no reference to me, for the two of them walked away in the direction of the commandant's office. The chauffeur began to work on the car, and swore

when he found he had run out of petrol, whereupon the sentry offered to get him some. This was contrary to his orders, for he was forbidden to leave the motor. I then showed myself and was about to get into my hiding place. But the chauffeur prevented me, declaring that he was risking ten years' imprisonment by this joke (as he called it), and that he must therefore have £500 in cash on the spot, and another £500 later.

This was a low trick. It was impossible for me to pay £500 at once, and I could not guarantee to pay the second instalment, for it was beyond my means. As discussion did not help matters and I could hear the footsteps of the sentry returning with the petrol, I had, with a heavy heart, to give up my plan.

CHAPTER XXVI

A BOLDER PLAN

At last I got tired of these continual failures, and began to see that these methods would never succeed. If I was going to escape it must be by some method that no one had yet thought of trying. Only in this way, aided by unlimited bluff, should I succeed. I was thinking not only of the actual escape from the camp, but of the possibility of getting out of the country. Escapes from all the camps had been made by the dozen, but only one in a hundred was actually successful. The worst of it was that that big sheet of water, the North Sea, lay between England and Germany! How much easier it was for English officers in Germany, who, in two days' march, were in neutral territory, Holland, and consequently in safety!

All who had so far attempted to escape from English camps had started out with the idea of finding a ship or a boat that would take them to Germany. The consequence was, that the coast, and particularly the ports, were closely watched, especially when it was known that prisoners had broken out of camp. If I were to succeed, then, I must find some other way. After weeks of anxious thought I hit upon a method

that seemed to offer chances of success. I would go by air!

The plan sounds very daring at first. I was therefore not very angry with my friends who declared me mad when I broached my scheme. All the same I was so persevering that I at last found a few friends who declared themselves willing to help me.

I had thought long and carefully about the problem of getting out of the camp, and had found a possible solution. The great difficulty was to find (1) an aerodrome in easy distance of Donington Hall, and (2) a trained flying-man, for I had never sat in an aeroplane.

From a map in Meyer's *Encyclopædia* I reckoned that the distance from Nottingham (in the neighbourhood of Donington) to Ostend would be roughly 300 kilometres by air route. With a modern type of machine, therefore, one ought to reach Ostend in about two hours, if all went smoothly. If the machine which I intended to annex had not enough petrol in the tank we should have to come down on the sea and trust to chance to find a rescuer. But I was certain that petrol could be found somewhere or other in the aerodrome. On my journey to London I had noticed that the flying ground at Hendon, at that time the largest in England, was practically unguarded. What was the use of detailing a large number of sentries, seeing that no one had ever yet thought of stealing an aeroplane!

I became so enthusiastic at the idea of being free much sooner than I had expected and of taking

home an up-to-date aeroplane that some nights I never slept a wink.

Of the flying men in camp none was suitable. They had all been captured early in the war and had never handled a modern machine. But as new prisoners were constantly arriving I was confident that sooner or later a flying man would turn up. There could be no doubt there was a flying ground somewhere in the neighbourhood of Donington, for almost every day aeroplanes flew over the camp in a northerly direction. They always landed a long way off in one certain direction. Watch in hand, we observed their flight every day, noting when and where they landed, and were, in this manner, able to estimate approximately the distance of the flying ground. I used the same method in studying the neighbouring railway system. By observing the speed of the locomotives and by noting the time that elapsed before the first stop, we were enabled roughly to locate the neighbouring railway stations. We made our observations independently, and fixed in this manner also the direction of trains which we could hear but not see. Naval-Engineer Lieut. Laurer was very helpful to me in preparing two large maps by the aid of our observations and of a tiny map which we had discovered in an old novel. One of them represented the immediate surroundings of Donington; the other represented the southern portion of England and a strip of the North Sea as far as Ostend.

From new prisoners who arrived at the camp *via* Nottingham I learned that an aerodrome was being

built near the railway about eight miles from the camp. Two hangars were finished and a third was in course of construction. All our information pointed to the conclusion that a big biplane was already stationed there.

This was extraordinarily favourable. The smaller the aerodrome, the smaller would be the guard. One night-watchman would certainly be the only guard here. Even if there were two sentries we should have no difficulty in overpowering and tying them up and then flying away before the alarm was given.

Two labourers who were building a small shed in the camp I steadily plied with cigarettes till they got quite talkative. They, too, had noticed the aeroplanes which flew daily over the camp. In the hope of getting detailed information from them, I tried a bluff which completely took them in. I asked them what had happened to the pilot who had passed over the camp two days before and had then crashed at X. At the same time I pointed in a direction in which I knew there was certainly no aerodrome. The story of the crash was, of course, an invention of my own. As I had expected, they shook their heads incredulously and declared emphatically that no pilot had crashed yet. Besides, they added, there was no flying ground in that direction; the two nearest aerodromes were at L. and U. In confirmation of their statements they described exactly the direction and distance. When I contradicted them—went so far as to suggest laughingly that they did not know the geography of

their own country—they offered to prove their statements by means of a map. And next day they actually brought a beautiful big cycling map. After acknowledging my mistake I quietly dropped the map in my pocket during the course of the conversation which ensued. The trick had worked splendidly. I presented them with a number of cigars and then disappeared with my map.

The camp was now too small to accommodate the ever-increasing number of prisoners. A number of huts were therefore built on what had hitherto been the recreation-ground. It therefore became necessary to enlarge the recreation ground. The work had been begun during the winter and was finished in the early spring. The new ground, which adjoined the old one, was also surrounded by a wire entanglement and several sentry-boxes. It was to be opened only during the day time and to be closed at sunset. At the far end we were allowed to make two tennis-courts. The tools had to be handed in every evening.

In order to keep up the rôle of the 'sick man,' I took no part in any sort of sport or physical exercises. But I followed with the keenest interest the progress of the work on the tennis-courts. My plan was now fixed. I asked my friends who were looking after the tennis-courts to make a gully, on the side farthest from the camp, for the rain-water to drain off. This gully was to be gradually and unobtrusively widened and deepened so that two men could lie in it. The construction of this drain was, after some hesitation, sanctioned by the commandant, and was supervised

by him and his officers. In this way the sentries got the impression that there was no objection on the commandant's part to the drain, and they suspected nothing when the prisoners worked at it again a few weeks later. This time, of course, without the colonel's sanction. As no spades or shovels were available preserve-tins cut and flattened out were used instead. Progress with these tools was, of course, very slow.

Fate decreed that at this time a young flying-man, Flight-Lieutenant Winkelmann, was brought to the camp. He had been shot down a short time before on the Western front, and had all sorts of interesting news to tell us. So many new officers were arriving now at the camp, some of them during the night, that it was often weeks after their arrival that one got to know them. This happened here. One day W. spoke to me. We introduced ourselves, and W. asked me without any circumlocution if it was true that I was thinking of bolting. When he noticed my surprise he added in explanation that he was a pilot and was extremely anxious to join me. As a trained fighting pilot, but with no knowledge of English to help him in a journey by road, he regarded my plan of escaping by aeroplane as the only one possible for him.

He knew all the modern machines, he said, and had often flown captured English aeroplanes behind the lines. I, on the other hand, knew the country and the people, and could speak the language. In this way we should be mutually complementary!

No sooner said than done. With more enthusiasm

than ever I now worked in conjunction with W. in making all the necessary preparations.

I knew that several other groups of officers were also planning to escape. But I considered my scheme the most hopeful and was therefore anxious to anticipate the others, so that they should not wreck my chances.

In order the better to lull the suspicions of the English, I founded a theatre and undertook the duties of director.

As manager of this fine company I was in daily contact with the camp authorities, for I had to obtain their approval for every trifling arrangement. But the English appeared to be still suspicious, for one evening, after the orderly officer with his escort had passed through the hut and counted all the inmates, I heard him expressly ask the sentry on the door, 'Is Lieutenant Spindler there also?'

This business made me anxious, especially as it was repeated for a few nights. In about four weeks' time the drain ought to be big enough to conceal us. Luckily the big opening was somewhat hidden by tall grass which grew along the edge.

It was now high time to disarm the suspicions of the English. I therefore reported sick, and kept my bed. 'Nervous breakdown' was the name of my malady. Each time before the doctor came I did a quarter of an hour's physical jerks and smoked strong cigars. My pulse was so bad after this that the doctor sometimes looked at me with a very grave air. He did not know what to make of it, as I looked outwardly fairly healthy. In order to deceive him further

I once had him fetched in haste. My friends, Nava. Reserve Lieutenants Elson and Filter, who helped me in many other details, told him that I had got up and had suddenly collapsed in a dead faint. I was really feeling rather bad that day and had been smoking heavily. The doctor, therefore, found me lying in bed like a log, felt my pulse for a long time, and prescribed milk, biscuits, and all sorts of medicine.

From that day forward he was really satisfied that I was ill, and I noticed to my joy that the orderly officer's questions now ceased. When the evening count was taking place I lay with my head completely hidden under the clothes, as if I could not stand the glare of the flashlight. For the first few days the sentry would lift the blanket as he went past, in order to see my face. But as I was always there next morning they soon gave this up and were satisfied with the fact that there was some indistinct bundle under my blankets which must certainly be identical with Lieutenant Spindler, who was suffering from nervous breakdown. My bed stood in the middle of the hut with its head to the door. I always kept the head of the bed covered with a couple of towels, so that the sergeant, whose duty it was to count the sick men during the morning parade, could not see me from the door. At first he used to come to my bed and satisfy himself that I was there. He gave this up after a time, and simply called out, 'Are you there, Lieut. Spindler?' whereupon I would raise one hand and he would trot off quite satisfied.

Everything was going splendidly. Occasionally I got up and walked about for a couple of hours, leaning on a stick like a helpless old man, took an interest in the theatre, and went for treatment to the English dentist who was, at the same time, an officer of the guard. The day was now drawing near, and I had to take a certain number of officers into my confidence. The best for my purpose were Lieut.-Commander von Spiegel (the author of 'U 202'), who had recently been captured, and the Turkish commander, Hakki, who helped me in my attempt in the most faithful manner and by every means in their power. A tennis tournament, which was to last several days, was held about this time, and helped us considerably. As 'sportsmen,' the English were much interested in it and took it as a matter of course that the court was rolled every morning and evening. The team that drew the big roller consisted of ten or twelve men, but Spiegel saw to it that at least twenty men took a hand and pushed the roller up and down with much shouting. The rolling usually lasted till the time of closing the ground. Then the roller was left behind and the noisy team trooped off to the inner portion of the camp. The sentries slowly got so accustomed to this game that they never troubled to look when the roller team gave their Indians' war-whoop. I occasionally lent a hand also in the work of rolling the court, so that my presence later on should excite no suspicion. Some of the largest wicker chairs, with the wickerwork carried right down to the ground, on which the spectators sat during the day, were left

during the night on the court. This also excited no suspicion.

So far all was well. Our hour had come. If our calculations were correct and everything went smoothly, we ought to reach the flying ground in four to six hours. We were provided with all necessaries for a twenty-four hours' march. The food we had saved up in spite of the ever-dwindling ration. We also had maps, English money, and a couple of strong pocket-knives. Unfortunately, we had no wire-cutters. In spite of the risk, therefore, we had to try to get through the barbed-wire entanglement by means of our hands. A pair of stout gloves, which afterwards proved more a hindrance than a help, were intended to protect us somewhat against cuts and scratches. In case we should have to enter a large aerodrome by daylight (which would be the case if we did not find the little flying ground close to the railway line), we got together or manufactured complete flyingmen's uniforms—airmen's helmets made of scraps of leather and cloth, and proper big flying-goggles made of window-glasses (which we had cut into shape under water) mounted in chamois leather. The glass was from a pane which we had broken for this purpose in the commandant's office.

In this costume, with our puttees, our leather waistcoats, and our goggles, I was convinced we could march on to any big flying-ground and enter any shed where no work was being done. The more we bluffed, the more likely we were to succeed. At an aerodrome of forty to fifty hangars one man often

does not know another. If therefore an engine in a hangar were started up (W. had given me the necessary instruction) nobody would take any notice, especially if we showed enough self-confidence. In my opinion the greatest difficulty and danger would be in approaching the German coast, when we should certainly be fired upon. So long as we were flying over England we should be safe. Wind and weather were extremely favourable. We therefore determined to leave the inhospitable spot on Wednesday the 12th July, 1917. It was only then that I thought seriously about the dangers attendant on an attempt at escape. When Prondczinsky escaped, the commandant court-martialled a sentry who, out of kindness of heart, had failed to fire at once at the fugitive. But these were only passing thoughts. The thought that next morning we might be on German soil silenced all other considerations. Our faithful helpers believed so confidently in the success of our venture that they gave us letters for home.

Next morning, when play in the tournament was continued, a couple of large wicker chairs were carried on to the tennis ground, and under the seats of these our kits were fastened. The chairs were placed thirty or forty yards from the drain, and during the whole of the day were occupied or kept under observation by the initiated, so that no unauthorised person should knock them over and reveal the whole secret. Lieut. Böttcher of the Marine Artillery, who was of the same height and had the same coloured hair as I, made the most frantic efforts all day to change the parting of

his hair from the left side to the right, the side on which I wore it. He had very kindly offered to occupy my bed during the evening count, in order to make the English think I was still there. This experiment, as we afterwards discovered, succeeded splendidly. Lying in my bed he would pull up the clothes so that only the back of his head could be seen. Then, as soon as the orderly officer had passed, he would hastily regain his own room on the first floor by a roundabout way, and would be lying there in his own bed before the orderly officer arrived.

In order that he should pass muster during the morning count also we had arranged that he should be sitting at my table with his back to the door, shaving, before the sergeant came. If he lathered his face well and turned round only very slightly when the sergeant called my name, the dodge would work all right. W. appointed a proxy in the same way. Two other men saw that we were entered three times a day in the sick list. In payment for this service they shared our rations between them! We also made arrangements for heading off the doctor in case he should appear in the hut and ask for his patients. We reckoned that by these arrangements we should gain half a day, at the most a whole day, before our flight was discovered. But, as we learned later, our comrades played their parts so well that the English did not know of our escape till four days after. And then it was only through an unlucky accident, for which our friends were not responsible.

During the day von Spiegel organised for the evening

a regular series of 'feint attacks,' which were absolutely necessary if our attempt was to succeed. For each one of the several sentries who guarded the camp, a few officers and men were told off. Their whole duty was, during the time the court was being rolled, to attract the attention of the Tommies in their neighbourhood, so that the latter should forget their duties for a few minutes. Special measures had to be taken in order to distract the attention of the guards nearest to us. In one corner a couple of officers, after an exchange of words, were to start fighting; at another corner an officer was to give a lecture, supplemented by pictures; at the third corner orderlies were to give an acrobatic display, etc. To crown all, our bandmaster arranged to give an open-air concert in the evening, which, if our absence had not been discovered before tattoo, was to end up with the tune, 'Good-bye, friends; to horse! to horse!'

CHAPTER XXVII

THE ESCAPE

When all these details had been arranged I went just before the evening muster—the last which I hoped to attend here—to the commandant and submitted for his approval a sketch which I had made for a theatre curtain. He was quite pleased with it and also with my assurance that my health was now so much improved that I hoped shortly to open our theatre. The good man really believed that the theatre was my only interest. How was he to know that I intended to give that same evening my first and only performance, and that I was wearing the costume for the part under my uniform at that very moment?

When the guard officers and N.C.O.'s appeared for the evening count I was convinced that everything would go according to plan. Careful observation extending over several weeks had taught us in what order the various officers, N.C.O.'s, and sentries performed their duties and relieved one another. I had chosen this particular day because the officers whose turn it was to take the count and do the rounds were somewhat less strict than their comrades. Likewise we had calculated that the sentry most dangerous to

us, perched as he was in his crow's nest only ten yards from the drain, would be relieved by an old soldier (who was short-sighted and wore glasses) just before the time we had fixed on for disappearing into the hole.

The count passed quickly and without incident. The English appeared to suspect nothing, and as soon as the 'parade' (as they called the count) was over, the officers of the guard prepared to go in to mess. As the dentist was one of them, I hurried after him and asked him if it would be convenient for me to come to him next day. I pretended that a back tooth was still paining me. In his usual kind way he tried to comfort me, explaining that he would be away for two or three days, as he was going on leave that evening, but that he would willingly help me on the following Monday! He disappeared through the gate of the compound and I raced off in the opposite direction—to the tennis-court, where I was anxiously expected. I had already taken leave of my friends before the evening muster. The whole camp was feverishly excited; for owing to the large number who were actively helping us, our secret had unavoidably become known to others who were taking no active part.

The rolling had already begun, accompanied by the usual war-whoops, W. standing with several others on the cross-bar of the roller. I took a place at one of the shafts. To the left of us was the sentry with the glasses craning his neck to see the strange book which the officers sitting on the grass under his crow's

nest were studying. Von Spiegel had had the brilliant idea of cutting out all sorts of coloured pictures from magazines and making them up into a gigantic scrap-book. He was sitting now at the end of the court with his big book explaining to my friends Filter and Elson the incongruity of the pictures. All three were laughing merrily, and the sentry, who understood not a word, was much interested. A glance round at the other sentries satisfied me that the other 'feint attacks' were drawing the enemy. The acrobats especially appeared to be holding the attention of the sentries. Now was the time to act. I made a sign to W. We pushed the roller once more forward, and then back close to the drain. There was a sudden bump, and my friend lay in the hole. None of the sentries had noticed anything.

One more turn up and down with the roller and I jumped in face downwards. W.'s head came in forcible contact with my heels, but I could not avoid it. Fortunately, his loud 'Auw!' was lost in the yells of the roller-team. With strained attention we waited to see if anything happened.

Everything seemed to be going on as usual. For about ten minutes more we heard the roller. Then the noise died down—the roller-team was retiring. Now and again we heard a loud laugh or a burst of applause. The humorous acrobats were apparently still busy. We heard von Spiegel say, 'Did you ever see anything so silly?' Then he closed his book with a bang, and we knew that the three of them were leaving the tennis-court. As they passed our trench

they whispered, 'All clear!' and then, '*Bon voyage!*' Then it gradually became quiet. The footsteps of the passers-by became fewer and fewer, till they finally ceased. It was time to close the gates of the recreation ground. Soon we heard the shrill whistle of the sergeant responsible for the closing of the gates. By the well-known blast we recognised that it was 'our' man. We need have no worries on that account.

Now, for the first time, I was able to take notice of the trench into which we had wedged ourselves and in which we concealed ourselves only by the utmost efforts. For it was neither broad enough nor long enough for two big men like us to stretch ourselves in it. By Jove! but it was a dirty hole! And not nearly so comfortable as it looked when seen from above! The clayey bottom was covered with a thin layer of water which we had had no opportunity of draining away. This was very unfortunate, for we could reckon on having to spend three or four hours here before venturing into the open. Most unpleasant of all were the numerous black beetles, ants, and other little animals which swarmed out of every hole and crawled boldly through our hair, over our faces, and down the backs of our necks, while we dared not make the slightest move to prevent them lest the sentry a few yards away should hear us. Now that the tennis-court was empty, it was so quiet that the slightest move could be heard. If I could only have turned over on the other side! My bones were getting so horribly stiff in this uncomfortable position. The situation even after a quarter of an hour became so

damnable that neither W. nor I could suppress an occasional curse or groan. But it was no good: we had to bow to the inevitable.

Slowly the time passed. The minutes seemed hours. Eagerly we listened for the tower-clock to strike. Never in all my life has time appeared to go so slow

'Listen!' whispered W. suddenly. We could hear footsteps approaching. The whole field seemed to echo with them. My heart beat faster and faster. Who could it be? The steps of the sentry in his crow's nest stopped. Then we heard him talking to some one.

Had they noticed something? Instinctively, as if to conceal ourselves, we buried our faces so deep in the muddy soil that we could hardly breathe.

A regular ostrich-trick! All the same, it comforted us somewhat. In a few minutes the voices ceased and the steps retreated again. We gave a sigh of relief. But next moment we had another fright. Something was rustling in the grass near us. From time to time the noise stopped. We both had the feeling that some one was stealing upon us. Perhaps it was one of the men who had just been speaking to the sentry? The rustling noise came nearer and nearer.

As if to torture me to the utmost, a black beetle at this moment crawled over my face and walked into my left ear. I suffered agonies. What was I to do? All my limbs began to tremble. The wretched beast was burrowing further. Damnation! I could stand it no longer. W. was anxiously pressing his head against my feet to keep me from moving. But

it was no use. I had to turn round slightly in order to shake the pestilent beetle out of my ear. As I did so I saw something that almost made me burst out laughing. Instead of the soldier's head which I expected to see, I saw a fine buck rabbit looking down at us full of curiosity. Another false alarm.

In the course of the evening many more of these ill-mannered quadrupeds came to our hiding-place and jumped over us or stared at us with astonishment. Some of them scooted away when they caught sight of us. Perhaps they, too, had been infected with the *Daily Mail* disease and saw a terrible danger in the 'Hun officers.'

Very slowly the time passed. And it would not get dark, much as we longed for nightfall. In the distance we heard the first sounds of the concert. The silence was not so marked now, and we could move very slightly without danger. Every tiny fraction of an inch that we altered our position was a blessing. In the wet, clayey soil of the drain our limbs had long become stiff and unmovable. Partly in order to avoid attracting the sentry's attention by whispering, partly in order to pass the time, we carried on a conversation in Morse code, making the signs by gently tapping with our fingers on the side of the trench.

Our conversation was going on nicely when we were suddenly interrupted by the shriek of the camp siren. Involuntarily we started. Was it an alarm signal? As we had put our watches in our inside coats we could not tell what time it was. We strained our

ears to hear if anything was happening. We had not long to wait, for the band immediately struck up the final march, 'Good-bye, friends! To horse! to horse!' A load fell from our minds.

The evening muster was now due, and if this also went off all right a small red lamp was to be shown in the top middle window of the castle. It was now slowly becoming twilight; but the minutes still seemed hours, and it was a long way from being dark enough to leave the trench. We wondered if the sentry had gone to sleep. The sound of his footsteps had long ceased, but other noises now began. Cattle grazing in the surrounding meadows, and numerous deer which came to the neighbouring drinking place, would rub themselves on the posts which carried the wire entanglement. In doing so they often entangled their horns in the barbed wire, causing it to rattle and shake throughout its length. The sentries had long got accustomed to these noises (for they occurred every night), a fact which was extremely favourable to our design. I reckoned heavily on the negligence of the sentries, for during my numerous nocturnal excursions I had observed that when it was near midnight and the orderly officer had visited his sentries, the latter usually put down their rifles in a corner and either leant against a post and slept or walked over to the next sentry, fifty yards away. Then they usually put on a pipe and chatted till the relief came.

The tower-clock struck eleven; so we had already been three hours in this damnable hole. Another half-hour and we might perhaps risk it. We carefully

raised our heads from time to time above the edge of the ditch in order to have a peep round. It was now getting dark rapidly. The neighbouring trees could be seen only very indistinctly. We made careful 'soundings.' All was quiet. In the top story of the main building a tiny red lamp burned. We gave each other a nudge of intelligence.

The sentry who ought to have been keeping watch just above our hiding-place had either disappeared or gone fast asleep. At least we could see no trace of him. No need for reflection now. Carefully we rose and crawled over the edge till we lay full length on the grass, keeping as low as we possibly could. The numerous electric lights which surrounded the camp threw their glare far beyond us.

At first we lay like logs and listened. We were not sorry to have a good stretch, for our limbs were almost paralysed from lying so long on the cold, wet earth, and it was a long time before the blood began to circulate. Like Red Indians on the trail we crept forward inch by inch, pausing every now and then in order to look round and regain our breath; for with our two suits of clothes, and the thick leather waistcoats which we wore under our tunics, this creeping was very heavy work. It was therefore a good half-hour before we reached the wicker chairs and could unfasten our kits. And this, too, had to be done slowly and carefully, for the canes of the chairs creaked at every touch.

As soon as we had got all our stuff, we began the return journey in order to reach the particular spot

in the fence which we had selected as offering the least difficulty. The way back was twice as long as the first journey. We crawled along, holding our kits partly in both hands, partly in our teeth. In this manner another half-hour passed. We had arrived at the wire. Alas, this wire entanglement, seen from the ground immediately beneath it, was much more tangled and twisted than our previous cursory examination had led us to think. But this was no time for reflection and regret.

We felt our way in between the single strands, twisted them aside as far as possible, and pushed slowly through. In order to get a purchase, we tried leaning on our hands on the ground. But this was not a success, for the ground under the entanglement was covered with a network of wire coiled and twisted in every direction, but hidden by the grass which had grown up through it, and our hands and knees were soon torn and bleeding. On every side it caught and tore us. Scarcely had we torn our clothes free from one strand when we were caught fast by a dozen others. So far as we could, we helped each other, loosening the barbs from each other's clothes and bodies. We had worked our way so far that we were hanging almost in the middle of the entanglement when the tower-clock struck twelve, and we heard the approaching footsteps of the relieving sentries. What were we to do? In the few minutes before the reliefs arrived we could not possibly get clear of the entanglement. A good three yards of wire still lay ahead of us. To retreat was also impossible, for if

we tried to creep backwards we could not use our hands to part the wires. So we sat tight, with big drops of blood coursing down our faces and bodies. 'Quiet!' we whispered to each other, and tried to hold our breath, for we were panting with our exertions, and a soldier was coming along the fence whistling cheerfully. We were in a devil of a hole. If the man discovered us we might expect a bullet next moment,[1] for there was no escaping here. We tried to turn our faces downwards, lest they should show up in the darkness.

Two minutes of the most tense expectation! Sweat poured down me from every pore and my pulse throbbed from the exertion and excitement. Nearer and nearer came the sentry. Another five paces and he would be up to us. Thank goodness! The danger was past. The man stared stupidly in front of him as he came up to us—and passed by! He stopped at the sentry-box, said something we did not catch, and then went on to the next box. We gathered all our strength in one great effort to get clear of the fence. We no longer thought of the wounds we received. Though every single barb at first had made us wince, all pain was now forgotten in the excitement of our efforts.

Dragging one's body through a barbed-wire entanglement is incredibly slow and difficult work. We were becoming visibly weaker, and many times thought we could go no farther. But inch by inch we struggled

[1] The author evidently forgot that he was not liable to be shot without warning. His friend Heward, who was discovered in the position described, lived, as the author mentions later (p. 235), to occupy the cell next to his.—Tr.

towards the outside wire. Half a yard more—a quarter of a yard, and we should be there. The last bit was extremely exhausting, for we hardly had sufficient strength left to part the few strands which separated us from freedom.

But at last this difficulty also was overcome. Puffing and blowing, we worked through the labyrinth of wires till we got our heads free. With our last ounce of strength we helped each other to get body and legs clear, and then we threw ourselves down, completely exhausted, in the tall grass. We were, to use an expression of the country, so 'pumped out,' that for the next ten minutes we could hardly move a limb. But the thought that at long last we were free did not let us rest long. After a short rest we set about putting as great a distance as possible between us and the camp. Unfortunately, it was impossible to avoid leaving footprints in the tall grass, but we hoped that the heavy dew would soon straighten up the grass again.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE MISSING AERODROME

About 200 yards from the camp stood two tall, very old trees. Inside one of these, which was decayed and hollow, we hid our uniforms (which were now in tatters), so that the English, when they discovered our absence, should be under the impression that we had no civilian clothes and were still in uniform. We made first for the neighbouring wood in order to reach the road which leads from Donington to Trent. We had to make our way through thick undergrowth. It was so dark that we could scarcely see our hands in front of us. Thus it happened that when we were getting out of the bushes a little later we trod on some big animal which rose snorting with rage. It was a cow which we disturbed in its sleep, and which would have angrily thrust its horns into our bodies if we had not promptly jumped back. Our way then led over hilly pasture-land and over half a dozen wooden fences to the main road.

Arrived there, we debated whether we should follow the road or go through the fields. We did not need to deliberate long. A hundred yards from us, where the road went over a small hill, we heard voices. Soldiers of the camp guard, no doubt, who were

returning from furlough. No one else would be likely to be there at that time. We at once jumped over a thorn hedge into a large cornfield. In our endeavour to get away from these people as quickly as possible, for their dog had suddenly begun to bark, we rushed blindly forward, each on his own. I stopped behind a bush to listen. The dog was still barking away, but the voices were no longer audible. I looked all round but could see no trace of my companion. I called his name a couple of times. There was no answer. Then I whistled quietly. Again no answer. Suddenly there was a rustling noise near me. I held my breath, not knowing whether it was a friend or an enemy. From time to time the rustling noise went on. Then suddenly I saw a tall figure in front of me. I clenched my fist ready to strike, and then I suddenly heard myself called by name. Thank goodness—it was W. We waited for a while, and as all was again quiet, we turned our faces south. At the double we went down-hill, over cornfields, clover-fields, and stubble. Our heavy clothing impeded us a good deal. We were getting horribly thirsty, but could not afford ourselves a drink, for we had only two small medicine bottles full of whisky, which we intended to use only in case of dire necessity, and did not know when we should be able to replenish them.

We had done about a quarter of an hour's run at this pace when the ground suddenly became soft. We must therefore be near the river. We plodded slowly forward. Suddenly W. gave a subdued cry. He was almost up to his hips

in a morass. Next moment I was in the same plight.

By great exertion we succeeded in working backwards out of the morass, which had seemed to be drawing our legs down with irresistible force. Two steps more and we should probably never have got out of it. Even when we were clear of it the thought made us shudder.

We felt our way to the right and left. Nothing but reeds and bog. As progress was impossible in this direction we turned sharp to the right. According to our reckoning we ought in this way to find one of the bends of the river. Our only box of matches had got wet in the bog, so that we could make no use of our map. We could only hope our direction was correct. We had changed our course so often that we hardly knew in which direction we were going. We had wandered on for about half an hour when we struck a railway line. A hundred yards ahead of us the line forked. We were in a hole again. Where did these rails lead to? We knew from memory that no railway junction of any sort was shown by our map in this district. According to our calculations the line on the left ought to cross the Trent. So off we started again. We climbed the high hedges which flanked the railway on both sides, and followed the line on the far side.

In the east it was beginning to dawn. We had reckoned on being at our aerodrome by this time, and we had not yet reached the Trent. On the left something bright shimmered through the trees—water! We breathed a sigh of relief. At this point the Trent was hardly thirty yards wide. We were on the other

side in no time. And now our spirits rose. The country round here seemed to be quite uninhabited. When it was almost daybreak we came to a fork in the road. At the corner stood a small battered sign-post. Now we could see where we had got to. We were nearly twelve miles out of our way! 'Rotten luck,' we grumbled, and then we hastened our pace to try to make up the lost ground. But the spirit was more willing than the body. Our legs could hardly carry us, which was not to be wondered at after what we had gone through. Our progress became more painful, and visibly slower. Once we allowed ourselves just one tiny drop of whisky and a piece of home-made chocolate in order to revive our failing strength. This brought us another disappointment. In order to make the chocolate particularly nourishing, W. had put into it all the sugar he could get. The consequence was that after eating our 'home-manufacture' we got an all-consuming thirst, which we had no means of satisfying.

We were now getting into a more populous neighbourhood, and we had to be careful in order to escape observation. We had agreed that if we were spoken to my companion would pretend to be deaf and dumb, so that his speech should not betray him. Now and again we met a couple of labourers. They looked at us with some astonishment, mumbled 'Good-morning,' and plodded on. Once we were spoken to by a man of a somewhat better class who wanted to know if we had seen a horse and cart in the direction of so-and-so. I answered in the negative, briefly but politely. Then we went on again; but we both had a feeling

that the man was looking round at us. This made us uncomfortable. Ahead of us was a large village. We must avoid it at all costs ! That was all very well, but on the right of the road the fields were under water and the fields on the left were in the same condition. So there was nothing for it but to keep straight on.

With our parcels, wrapped up in bright curtain material, under our arms, we marched through the village as if we were going to work. Fortunately, we met very few people, and in five minutes we had passed the last house in the village and were again in open country. In order to reach the railway-line we were making for we now had to bear to the right. We found the spot all right where the railway coming from the north crosses the Trent and bends southwards towards Nottingham. We could not be far from our objective now. The thought of this gave us new strength. We marched along for another two hours carefully scanning the country to the right and left—and found nothing, not the smallest sign which could lead us to believe that there was a flying-ground in the neighbourhood.

Where on earth could the flying-ground be? We concealed ourselves in some bushes and studied the map. We were quite right—we had made no mistake about our position. The aerodrome ought to be somewhere within a radius of two miles of the spot where we were. Once more we took up the search, scouting back to the left and right, then forwards again. We examined the country in this way for four miles round. Not a sign of a flying-ground—not even an aeroplane to be seen.

Just a moment though! Yes. W. pricked up his ears. 'Here's one coming,' he said casually, as if it had no interest for us. We could hear the drone of an engine from the north. Shortly afterwards we saw a tiny speck in the sky which rapidly grew bigger and bigger. A biplane! 'Ours!' I could hardly conceal my joy. In a few moments he was over us, and we should soon know where he was going to land. It was scarcely 1200 feet up as he passed us. Eagerly we watched his direction. But the fellow made no preparation to land; he flew on and on, straight ahead in his original direction. In a few minutes he was only a dot in the sky again. We looked at each other questioningly, but we got no answer. We discussed the pros and cons, and finally decided to go forward for a while. Perhaps we should find some clue on the way. If not, we decided we should rest for a while in a wood or cornfield and wait to see if other aeroplanes came along which might give us a clue to their objective.

The sun rose higher and higher and beat down mercilessly on our tired heads. Our thirst was becoming unbearable. If we could only find water! In the distance we could see a factory. It looked as if it were by the waterside, and we turned our steps towards it. High bushes hid us from the eyes of the operatives, and we were able to approach the factory unseen. We had not been mistaken—we had come to a river. It was none other than the Trent, which we had crossed during the night. But what a filthy, smelly stream it was! The surface shimmered with all the colours of the rainbow. Then we suddenly

remembered that below Donington there was one succession of factories of all sorts, dye-works, and so forth, along the river. Angrily we turned about and looked round for a hiding-place—which we soon found.

We lay down in the shadow of some high, thick bushes and tried to alleviate our burning thirst by sucking the moisture from stalks of grass. Then we stretched ourselves out in order to get a little rest, for we were dog-tired. About two o'clock W. woke me up. A dog was barking close by. Were we being followed already? Our absence must have been discovered at the camp by this time. I carefully peeped over the bushes and looked round. A small boy was coming along the road from the mill playing with a dog. This explained the barking. I went round the bushes on to the road and then went slowly down to meet the boy in the hope of getting some information. I dropped a sixpence in the road and then pretended to be looking for something. The boy fell into the trap, helped me look for the coin, and found it, whereupon I made him a present of it. We got into conversation, and I then made use of the same dodge which had served me in the camp. I mentioned the pilot who had crashed somewhere in the neighbourhood, but the boy, of course, knew nothing about him. In the course of the conversation I learned from him that there must be a flying-ground somewhere close by. Unfortunately, the boy could give me no details, as he had never seen the place. But he was able to give me an exact description of the railway lines in the vicinity. He told me the times of departure

of a few trains which went from the village to Nottingham, and I then gave him a cigarette and pretended I was going away. As soon as he was out of sight I went to W. and related what I had learned.

On the strength of this, we decided to continue our search as long as this was possible without being seen; for we were now coming into inhabited areas. We would rest at some particularly favourable spot, and then continue our march during the night. It would be safer to avoid the high roads as much as possible and keep on one side of them. This was not so easy as it sounds, for in this district there was hardly a single field, no matter how small it was, that was not surrounded by a high fence or hedge. In the majority of cases this was supplemented with a strand or two of barbed wire. Many times during the next few days we had to retrace our steps because we had struck one of the numerous unbridged canals which intersect this district. This water also was undrinkable. I longed to enter one of the farm-houses and ask for a drink of water, but it might have caused suspicion. But we were at last so tortured by thirst that we threw ourselves full length on the grass and greedily drank the dirty water from a pool which, as all the signs too plainly showed, served as a watering-place for cattle. In order to fortify ourselves further we attacked our only tin of sausage ('bribery price, 30s.'), which was beginning to get bad in the excessive heat. We had long given up all hope of finding fruit or vegetables in the fields. In this horrible country there appeared to be nothing but grass, filthy canals

hedges, and barbed wire, which was gradually tearing our clothes to pieces. Luckily we had sewing materials with us, which had already helped to repair the damage caused by the wire entanglement round the tennis-court.

Three whole days we wandered round this district, now to the right, now to the left of the railway-line, hunting for the flying-ground. The nearest other aerodrome, of which we had exact details, lay too far away to be reached on foot without provisions for the journey. We had decided to travel by train only in the last extremity, for it meant jumping on a passing goods train and travelling as stowaways. If our escape had been discovered—and we were bound to assume that it had—the first precaution taken would be to have the railway stations watched. During the daytime, if we were not tramping, we hid in small thickets or in little hay-cocks which we made from scraps of hay left behind in the fields. In these hay-cocks we slept also. We employed our nights in scouring the country. But for all our search we found nothing—the little flying-ground remained a mystery.

We were beginning to get tired of this business. We had twice searched the country on both sides of the railway, and it was impossible that we should have missed the aerodrome if it existed. In consequence of the continued strain of the journey and the lack of water and food—we had now only a couple of slices of dry bread left—our strength was visibly failing. To make matters worse, the effect of sleeping on the wet ground, following our long vigil in the tennis-court drain, was that my old rheumatic pains

returned, my knees and right shoulder being sometimes so sore that I could hardly move.

It was quite plain we could not go on like this, and we decided that next day we should go to Nottingham, buy some food there, and then go on by rail to London, whence we could easily reach the big flying-ground at Hendon.

But before attempting this we had to find out what measures had been taken in consequence of our escape. In a newspaper of the day before, which we found on the road, there was no mention whatever of our flight. This was certainly not what we expected. Perhaps it was a new dodge of the English to lull us into security so that they should catch us the more easily? But I couldn't believe the English were so sly, and we were at a loss for an explanation.

In gorgeous weather we arrived again on the evening of the third day in the neighbourhood of the Trent. The roads gradually became less deserted, and the numerous little villas proved that we were approaching a large town—it was Nottingham. Night after night we had watched its searchlights in the sky. From time to time we met a couple of anglers staring straight ahead as they passed. A cyclist asked us if he was on the right road to X, and I hastily assured him he was, though I had not the slightest notion where the place was. As we turned a corner we suddenly met a policeman coming towards us. Careful was the word. With our pipes in our mouths and our hands thrust deep in our pockets, we passed by, spitting and cursing in the approved manner. The man measured

us from head to foot with a glance, but fortunately did not address us. The noise of an aeroplane overhead distracted his attention. We, too, looked up and saw, only about 300 feet up, a large biplane following the course of the Trent which we were now skirting. We wondered if he was searching for us.

On the left of the road a small farm came in sight, and as luck would have it we met at the same moment a boy who had asked me that same morning for a cigarette. As I had given him two or three he now greeted us with a friendly smile from the far side of the road. I went up to him and asked him if he lived here; and as he answered in the affirmative, I asked him if his mother was at home and if she would sell us some food.

He ran across the road into the house and came back at once with the news that his mother was at home and asked us to come in. W. pretended to be deaf and dumb, so I alone accompanied the boy, telling him at the same time that as the weather was so fine we intended to picnic in the open air, a plan of which the youngster thoroughly approved. His mother received me with a friendly 'Good-afternoon, sir,' and invited me to sit down in the kitchen. Then a long conversation about the war and the 'damned Germans' ensued, while the good woman was busy making some excellent tea. Then she made up a parcel of cream-cheese and bread and butter wrapped in lettuce leaves, and gave me a big bottle of tea. I paid a shilling for the whole lot, expressed my thanks, and took leave of the good people, and then

hurried off with my rich booty to W., who was waiting anxiously for me under a tree. Only at one other time have I eaten so greedily and so much at one time. That was the day a year later, when I was released from captivity and a proper meal was put before me for the first time!

Thus fortified, we continued our journey. But I, first of all, called the boy in order to get some information from him. I learned in the course of the conversation that there was a large aerodrome north of Nottingham, on the other side of the Trent. This was probably correct, for we had seen several machines flying in this direction. 'Oh,' I said in astonishment, when he spoke of the big biplane which we had recently seen and which he said was stationed at Nottingham, 'I thought it was from the small aerodrome by the side of the railway.'

'Oh, no, sir,' the boy answered, with a smile at my ignorance, 'the place you mean has been closed for a long time. It was closed about six weeks ago.'

I very nearly swore. But I restrained myself in time, and took leave of the boy, saying we still had a long tramp in front of us.

So all our wanderings had been useless. The last news about the aerodrome had come to the camp about eight weeks previously. It was undoubtedly correct then. It was our misfortune that the aerodrome had been closed down in the meantime. Who could have foreseen it? But there was no time for vain regrets. Besides, we had other information now; so, up, and on to Nottingham!

CHAPTER XXIX

RECAPTURE

We studied the map and found that practically in the centre of Nottingham there was a bridge over the Trent which was, at this point, about twice as broad as at Donington. We had to cross by this bridge in order to get to the aerodrome, for it was out of the question to think of swimming across the river, as I could hardly raise my arms now as high as my chest. With new courage and new strength we looked round for a sleeping place in a neighbouring field, so that we could walk into Nottingham at dawn next morning. But we had hardly slept two hours when water began to trickle through the thin layer of hay with which we had covered ourselves. Damnation! A thunderstorm was in full swing and we had been so tired that we noticed nothing till it was too late. Sleep was now out of the question, for everything was wet and clammy. So we got on our legs again and followed the lights of Nottingham, which we could see reflected in the sky.

As the morning dawned we were almost at the entrance to the town. The streets were thronged with workpeople flocking to their factories. From the left came a crowd of about fifty workmen and women

who turned down the way we were going. We joined these. As we went along we met numerous policemen, but they fortunately gave us only a cursory glance.

We were passing the first houses of the town. The approach was very uninviting; nothing but monotonous small red houses, and numerous factory chimneys. The streets were not particularly well kept. In front of us walked a tiny old man who carried a sack on his bowed shoulders, and every now and then poked with his stick the rubbish heaps along the street. From time to time he picked up something and put it in his bag. Thus it came that he was sometimes in front of us, sometimes behind us, for we stopped now and then to find out our way and to look at the advertisement boards. At the corner of a street we came upon a huge notice in bold print :—

ATTENTION !

German officers escaped from Donington Hall on Saturday evening.

Their names and description are :—

KARL SPINDLER.—German naval officer, aged 30, complexion fresh, hair dark, eyes blue, stout built, height 5 ft. 11 in., clean shaven, speaks good English, dress probably civilian.

MAT ERNST WINKELMANN.—German naval officer, aged 23, complexion fair, hair dark brown, eyes brown, slim built, height 5 ft. 10 in., clean shaven,

speaks little English, dress probably civilian, jawbones have been broken by bullet.

ARPAD HORN.—Austrian military officer, aged 28, complexion fair, hair dark, eyes dark brown, stout built, height 5 ft. 6½ in., short stubby moustache, dress probably civilian, mole on face.

We had expected something of this sort, and were therefore not surprised to see this hue-and-cry notice on the wall. What did surprise us was the fact that we had been given a companion. I certainly knew that my friend Arpad Horn, H.M. Austro-Hungarian Honved-Husar Lieutenant, and at the same time director of our officer's band, had been thinking of escaping. But how and when did he get away? The notice said 'Saturday evening.' Surely our escape had been discovered before then! It was a mystery to us. But we were glad that the notice mentioned three, for it gave us a better chance of escaping suspicion.

We followed the tram lines, and were getting near the centre of the town. It was about seven o'clock, and the streets were showing signs of life. It was getting easier now to efface ourselves in the crowds. When the first shops were opened I bought a few cigarettes and asked how far it was to the bridge. I was told we were only two minutes from it. We hastened on in order to get on the other side of the Trent as soon as possible. A few steps brought us to the bridge. It was almost deserted.

On the left of the entrance, which was closed by a

barrier, was a toll-keeper's house which had to be passed by means of a turnstile. Near it several bridge-officials and two policemen were standing. Who could tell but that they were posted there for our benefit? In any case it appeared inadvisable to cross at that moment. As we walked on we agreed that it would be better to wait for the great crowd that would be crossing at eight o'clock, as we should then have a better chance of getting across unnoticed. We therefore turned down a neighbouring avenue and sat down on a seat.

It was a glorious fresh morning. I must say that this avenue, with its rich green grass and the birds twittering in the trees, was the only thing, so far, that had appealed to me in Nottingham. The appeal did not last long.

We had sat for about ten minutes and not a living thing had appeared in the avenue, when a policeman appeared round a corner on the right with two rascally looking scoundrels on each side of him. It looked as if he had all four of them manacled together.

I had pulled out a notebook and was reading out figures to my companion in order to look as if the five men did not interest us in the least. They, too, appeared to be taking no notice of us. We thought they were passing by all right. Then the unexpected happened. Just as they got abreast of us they did a sudden 'Left wheel! March!' hurled themselves on us, and held us down. It all happened so quickly that we had no time to think of escaping. Moreover, it would have been useless to try. The amusing feature

about the business was that we recognised one of the rascally-looking scoundrels as the tiny old man whom we had been pitying a few hours previously.

Then the explanation occurred to me. We had been observed by detectives and enticed into a trap. Before answering the policeman's abrupt questions I requested him politely to loose us, which he did. He then asked who and what we were, where we were going, etc. I told him our names were Grieve and Kendall, that we were mechanics and that we were going across the bridge to work. Then he asked where we lived, and I told him the name of a little village in the neighbourhood. I felt that the game was up, but wanted to fool him a bit further.

But the policeman was not to be fooled. He put his big paw on my shoulder and said in the most matter-of-fact tone, 'No, sir! You are Lieutenant Spindler, and your friend is Winkelmann from Donington Hall, aren't you?' And I answered in the same matter-of-fact tone, 'Yes, sir, you are right! I congratulate you.'

My answer struck the policeman as being so funny and at the same time so satisfactory, that he now treated us with marked politeness, and begged us to follow him. There was nothing else for it. We were caught again, and our fine schemes had come to naught. And so near success, too! We could not suppress a loud curse.

I had foreseen at the commencement, and had agreed with W. before we escaped, that there was no object in denying facts if a policeman should arrest

us. In such a case excuses would be useless, for without papers to prove our identity we should not be set free. And it was only necessary to telephone to Donington Hall to get an English officer to come over and identify us.

We had not far to go to the police station—it was only a hundred yards from the seat we had selected under the trees.

What followed can be told in a few words. At the police station we had to undress and hand over all our belongings. Only a handkerchief was given back to us. When the inspector saw our flying-kit he nodded approvingly and said, 'Yes, we had expected that! The aerodromes had been warned!'

After a short time we were put in a 'Black Maria' and taken across the town. On the way we stopped at various police stations to take more passengers on board. They were all English soldiers in uniform. Their first question on getting in was: 'Are you absentees?' Desertion seemed to be taken as a matter of course here. The policeman who caught us assured me that they collected twenty or twenty-five deserters every morning, which was very pleasant news for us.

The van stopped outside the police headquarters, We got out and were taken to the court cells. These. as well as the passages, were guarded by strong iron bars. A couple of detectives rushed at us and poured out their hatred of Germany on us in the most abusive terms. We had only a compassionate smile for these wretches.

Then the chief constable arrived, a very pleasant, fine old gentleman. He expressed his admiration for our very clever escape, and asked if there was anything we wanted. I asked him to let us pay for a warm breakfast and a few cigarettes out of the money taken from us, a request which he immediately granted. My complaint in regard to the conduct of the detectives evidently pained him, and he promised me relief as well as the punishment of the offenders. They kept a respectful distance from us after that. Shortly afterwards we were taken to the Guildhall—purely as a formality. We had to sit on the same seat with men and women accused of theft and other crimes. On a raised bench in front of us sat the chairman and other magistrates, reporters, detectives, and policemen. The seats on both sides were filled with spectators. It had evidently been noised abroad that the two 'Hun officers' had been recaptured.

A number of offenders were summarily dealt with, and then it was our turn. There was a general movement in the court-room. We had only two or three questions to answer. The mayor refused to believe that we had escaped on Thursday, as the Commandant of Donington Hall had expressly stated that we had broken out on Saturday. The explanation was obvious, and the consequence was that later on the English Parliament occupied itself with the question for a whole week, and asked for an explanation of the fact that two German officers had been able to escape in spite of the strong guard and the electrified wire fence. As a matter of fact, the electric

arrangement had been out of action for a long time. I answered all questions without hesitation. But I avoided, then and afterwards, giving any explanation of the manner of our escape.

This remained a mystery to the English, and we had many a joke about it. Towards evening an escort of twelve men came to fetch us. They turned out to be our old friends of the camp guard. They were very excited, and told us all about the impression which our escape had made. We now heard how our flight had been discovered. As our escape had not been discovered, our friend Horn, the day after our disappearance, suddenly decided to leave the camp also—which, with the help of the stout roller-team, he succeeded in doing. Then, as another day went by and our absence had not been discovered, the roller-team again got to work, and again one of them disappeared into the ditch. This time it was my mess-mate, Heward. Unfortunately, he got stuck in the wire entanglement and was discovered. Then the whole affair came to light. Otherwise our absence might not have been noticed for another week, and we might have succeeded in flying from Nottingham. It was rotten luck for all concerned.

Donington Hall had at once alarmed the whole country, especially the railway stations and aerodromes. Policemen, soldiers on foot, on bicycles, and on horse-back, airmen, and detectives—all were mobilised against us. In Nottingham the approaches to the town were watched by police and detectives, and it was one of the latter who eventually discovered us.

In answer to my question how the detective had discovered us, I learned that he had watched us for a long time without noticing our identity with the wanted men. Then he suddenly remarked that whenever we chanced to get out of step we quite mechanically regained step, and he said to himself, 'Those are certainly two German officers.' It was too silly.

The Nottingham local paper, which we happened to see, was very interesting. It showed again what importance the English attach to the escape of German officers. There was a short notice to the effect that the Imperial Chancellor, von Bethman Hollweg, had resigned, but in huge type right across the page was the heading: 'Two German officers from Donington recaptured!' Then followed columns of fanciful descriptions of our flight, mostly inventions.

We received a fine reception at the camp. All the officers and men of the guard were there. But I saw no angry faces—quite the contrary, in fact. The assistant commandant, Major Cook, whom I had learned to respect on account of his very correct conduct, assured me many times that he and his friends, in spite of all the trouble and unpleasantness which our escape had caused, were very sorry that we did not get away; our plan was so clever that we deserved to succeed. The whole camp was afoot when we were marched in. Our appearance, of course, caused much merriment. One English officer assured me that he had never seen a costume like ours off the stage, and he could not understand how we had got so far. It may be that he was right. We were put in

a detention cell, which had formerly been a horse-box, and remained there for three weeks, till the verdict of the court martial was promulgated. Heward was already in the adjoining cell. Three days later Arpad Horn arrived. He had been caught in London. He was entering a theatre at the moment, as he intended to go a journey next day.

Six months' imprisonment was what we had to expect. It might perhaps be more in my case, as the large map had been found in my possession which gave all the flying-grounds, and, along the coast, all the lightships and signalling stations, as far as our information extended. In Nottingham it had already been hinted to me that I might have to pay dearly for the map, as it might constitute evidence of espionage.

However, matters did not turn out so seriously. In fact, we were extraordinarily lucky. While we were on our way a conference took place at the Hague between the English and German representatives, at which it was agreed among other things that attempted escaped should, in future, be punished with not more than fourteen days' imprisonment. So, about nine weeks later, we had a joyful surprise when our doors were suddenly opened and we were informed that we were released from imprisonment.

CHAPTER XXX

THE PRIZE COURT INQUIRY

As it was feared, however, that we had got to know the lie of the land too well, we were taken next day to another camp, Holyport. But as the commandant there had no desire to lose his position through some new prank of mine, he took the first opportunity of getting rid of me. A month later, therefore, I again changed my domicile, arriving at Kegworth, unfortunately a day too late to take part in the escape of the twenty-three officers under Captain von Müller of the *Emden*. They had dug, with incredible trouble, a tunnel forty-five yards long, but were, unfortunately, recaptured a few days later.

The head-commandant of Kegworth, Lieutenant-Colonel P., an old Indian Army man, was the commandant of Donington Hall also, which was only five miles away. He was a terrible old martinet, but at bottom not a bad fellow, and one could get along with him all right if one knew how to treat him. Cheek was the only means of impressing him. He was not particularly pleased at my arrival, for which I did not blame him. When he was walking down the ranks and saw me again for the first time among his flock, he growled, 'I wish I had never seen you,' to which

I replied, 'The same here.' This struck him as being so natural that he had to laugh. I always returned him a Roland for his Oliver, and I must say that I was one of the few people who always got on well with this strange man—in spite of all the squabbles we had.

A few months passed, during which, of course, I was not idle. I had, on my arrival, found some comrades of the same mind as myself, and we at once got to work. But it was soon evident that there were even less chances of escape from Kegworth than from Donington, especially after the escape of the twenty-three officers. In the meantime I bombarded the commandant with written complaints which I wished to be forwarded to the War Office and Admiralty in London. The consequence was that, in November, I was summoned to appear before the Prize Court about the middle of the month. Now, I thought, was the opportunity for putting into practice the plan of escape which I had prepared. I had waited a long time for an opportunity of this sort, and had made the most detailed preparations. So had the English, as I discovered when we were ready to start. Instead of the one officer who previously accompanied me, I now had an escort of three officers and four men with fixed bayonets! This had not entered into my calculations. But better was to come. Instead of being taken to the Prize Court, where I had been cited as a witness, I was taken to the military detention barracks at Cromwell Gardens, where, for nearly two weeks, I was left to my reflections. No notice whatever

was taken of my questions and complaints. I could only conclude that I was going to be charged again in connection with the *Ayd* expedition.

The diminutive, dirty, icy-cold cell at Cromwell Gardens, and the outrageous treatment which I experienced at the hands of the officers there, who were not ashamed to insult me in the most vulgar manner, to knock me about and threaten me (weakened as I was by bad food), made these days almost worse than the first days of my imprisonment at Queenstown and Chatham. The cell was on the fourth floor of the building. I could see from my window the neighbouring houses and churches, and thus learned that I was in the South Kensington district, which had recently been attacked, time after time, by our bombing machines. Had I been lodged here by way of reprisal or as a protection against further attacks? After some days I was taken in a motor-lorry to the Prize Court. There I saw my first and second mates again, but had time to exchange only a few words with them.

The Prize Court, presided over by the Germanophobe, Sir Samuel Evans (who has since died) with the collaboration of the Attorney-General, Sir Frederick Smith, who had previously conducted the case for the Crown in the Casement trial, was only a farce. Sir Frederick Smith had just finished a long speech and sat down with a self-satisfied air, squinting alternately at me and at the tail of his wig, which appeared to be annoying him. Judges, interpreters, pressmen, and spectators strained their necks in order

to have a good look at me. Then I had to go into the witness box and was allowed to make a few statements, which led to a lively exchange of words between Sir S. Evans and Sir F. Smith on the one hand, and me on the other, for I protested against the treatment accorded me, and against this, in my opinion, illegal interrogation.

In a few minutes I was back in the motor-lorry on my way to the prison, conscious of having effected nothing.

My food consisted of a couple of slices of bread morning and evening, watery tea, and some thin, greasy soup, which was supplemented by either rotten herrings or a couple of potatoes. The herrings I threw away. The food was served in a dirty mug without a handle. My bed was a torn straw-mattress covered with old blood-stains. This was the only luxury I had. There was not even a towel. I got fresh air only through the draughty cracks of my ill-fitting window—too much fresh air, in fact, for it was bitterly cold November weather.

I noticed by the behaviour of the warders that something strange was happening. It was not till afterwards that I learned I had been the subject of lively debates in the House of Commons and in the Press. It was not altogether on account of the *Libau* affair.

A Member of Parliament had asked how it was possible that a Hun officer should breakfast in a restaurant-car in the company of a British officer, and be served by a British waiter?

The question referred to my journey to London to the Prize Court (or rather to the detention barracks), during which the English officer escorting me had offered me some refreshment. During this time of national danger the English Parliament debated the silly question for nearly a week! So I was once more the target of satires and cartoons in all the scurrilous papers, under headings such as, 'The Hun officer in the dining-car,' or 'Casement's pal.'

Fortunately, when the situation was getting unbearable, I found a sympathetic soul, an Irish soldier of the guard. Also, by means of Morse signals, which we made on the walls and ceilings, I discovered that a number of German seamen were interned here. Bit by bit I learned that they had been taken from submarines which had recently been destroyed. The poor fellows were very badly treated. My acquaintance with the Irish soldier then became very useful, for I was able to buy food and cigarettes for them, as well as for myself, restoring somewhat our lost strength.

The Irishman was a good fellow, as became apparent afterwards, so I plucked up courage and asked him to sell some valuables for me, which I still possessed. He did this, and he also brought me a sum of money which one of my mates had handed to him for me. I was now the lucky possessor of some pounds sterling. All I wanted now was a suit of civilian clothes, and some one to open my cell door. My Irish friend, after some hesitation, promised to help me. It was his turn on guard the next night but one, when he would bring me the necessary clothes and help me to escape.

He explained to me also how he proposed to divert suspicion from himself. His scheme was not a bad one, and I looked forward to his coming as a child waits for Santa Claus.

But again Fate willed otherwise. Next morning an escort came into my cell to take me to ——; they did not know or would not say where. Late that evening I arrived back in camp. Some of the bank-notes I fastened by means of sticking-plaster to the bare soles of my feet; the others I made into a thin roll, which I soiled and then hid under my straight-combed hair. I had often tried this method, and it succeeded again this time. After two years' experience as a prisoner of war, I knew the ropes.

When I arrived at the camp I had to go to the orderly room, where the whole staff was assembled. There I had to undress and was thoroughly searched. As I had to stand on my feet for this operation no one dreamt that my hoard was concealed under them. Feeling that I was safe once more, I could not overcome an impulse to have a little joke at the expense of the English. I laid some small silver and copper coins on the table in order to show them that I had obtained money in prison—for they knew that I had no money when I entered the cell at Cromwell Gardens. —General stupefaction. All eyes and mouths were open with astonishment. The commandant was the first to recover his speech. 'Have you got any more money?' he asked me, and with a most insolent smile I answered, 'Yes!' How much?' he asked quickly. 'Several pounds.' 'Where have you the money

concealed?' 'You must find out that for yourself,' I answered calmly. 'I can force you to tell me,' said the commandant. 'You won't do that,' I said. 'First of all you have no right to do it, and secondly if you did you would find nothing.'

For a moment the Englishman was at a loss for an answer. He shrugged his shoulders and looked questioningly at his officers, who were apparently less surprised than he was at my impudence; for it was not the first time they had seen me in this rôle.

After a pause the commandant ordered me to dress. The case was dismissed. This was the action of a gentleman. A few minutes later the money was in the safe keeping of one of my friends, who listened for hours to the recital of my adventures.

But the inhuman treatment which I had experienced during the last fourteen days had brought me so low that I broke down next day; and I lay in bed several weeks suffering from fever and from a horrible skin-disease caused by the dirty mattress. The excitement and the exertions of the last few months, in conjunction with bad and insufficient food, had sapped my strength and I no longer felt equal to the fatigues of another attempt at escape.

Fortunately, I had not to worry long over new schemes. In accordance with the Hague Convention of the same year I was exchanged and sent to Holland after exactly two years of captivity.

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